CHURCH SERMONS

BY

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LONDON.
PUBLISHED BY REEVES, SON & Co.
PLAYHOUSE YARD, LUDGATE HILL.

[1872]

VOL. II.

[illegible]

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Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

[No. 28.

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

(W. C. MAGEE, D.D.)

PREACHED AT QUEBEC CHAPEL, PORTMAN SQUARE,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 12, 1872.

(On behalf of the Friend of the Clergy Corporation.)

"In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."—John xvi, 33.

Those who first heard these words had probably little or no difficulty in understanding or applying them. They had no doubt as to what the "world" was in which they were to have tribulation and which their Lord had overcome for them. It was for them something very definite and visible. It was that same world in and from which He had been suffering tribulation—the world of their own nation—the world of hostile Jews.

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the world of Synagogue, and Sanhedrim, and Priest, and Levite, and Pharisee, and Sadducee, the world that had been hating and reviling Him and was about to slay Him. Into that world they knew that they were to go forth as His witnesses, and from that world they expected tribulation, and in that world it cheered them to know that they should be strengthened by Him who had overcome it. As years went on the disciples came to understand that the world had a far larger meaning, even the whole universe, that He had sent them to conquer in His name; and yet for many years that world was to them still a very definite and visible thing. When the last survivor of His band of Apostles looked out in his latter days upon the world that was still unconquered for Christ, it stood out before His vision as something clear and definite and distinctly separated from the Church—from those who could say, "We are of God and the whole world lieth in wickedness"—the whole world of yet unconquered and all but uninvaded heathendom, in the depths of its wickedness, of its sorrow, and its misery contrasted sharply and clearly with the Kingdom of God planted in the midst of it. Within the unity of the Church were as yet only those who choose for good and godliness; and without it only an uprising of wickedness, and sin, and shame, and misery. The line of demarcation between the ignorant world and the life, the love, and the beauty of Christ's Church was still distinctly to be traced. "We are of God;" all on *that* side "lieth in wickedness." But, as years have passed, brethren, we know that this sharp separation between the world and the Church is no longer to be seen. Over a great part of the world the Church no longer stands in this distinct antagonism to a definite and separate world. We have, in reality, not the Church and the World separated into two antagonisms, we have instead a Christendom—we have a world Christianized; we have a Church, perhaps somewhat secularized, but it is impossible any longer thus distinctly and sharply to separate the two. And yet, surely the world and the warning concerning the world, given us by our Lord, exists for us still. There is surely for us still that world to which we are not to be conformed, that world whose friendship is enmity against God, that world in which we, if we are to be His true disciples, shall have tribulation; that world which He has overcome that we may overcome it; that world against which every one of us in our baptism professes to be determined to fight. And if this be so, and we all know it is so, where is this world to which we are not to be conformed? Where are we to find this world that in His name we are to overcome? All Christians, as I have said, agree in saying there is such a world; unhappily few Christians agree exactly in saying where and what it is. There is the strangest and saddest confusion of thought amongst religious persons when they talk of "the world," and of not being "worldly." Ask them what they mean, and you will find that they almost always mean something distinctly visible, something that could be as distinctly marked off for them as was Judaism from the first Christians, or Paganism from the latter Christians; that they always mean something in a world whereof *they* are not, something that others do and *they* do not, amusements that *they* do not enjoy; practices that *they* do not follow, maxims to which *they* do not yield obedience. And strangely illogical, too, is their mode of speaking. Ask many an earnest and well-meaning Christian why he does not indulge in this or that amusement, or follow this or that practice, and he will tell you—because it is worldly. And if you ask him why it is worldly he will answer, those are the amusements and practises of worldly men. And if you ask him Who are worldly men? He will still say, men who indulge in worldly amusements and follow worldly practises. It would indeed be ludicrous, if it were not sad to observe the varied and nice shades of distinction which are made in men's attempts to draw the line between themselves and the world. To one man the Theatre is a worldly amusement and the Opera is not; whilst by another man both are regarded as equally worldly. For one person a novel is worldly and for another a religious work of fiction is lawful; for one person a large entertainment, a public one, is worldly, and for another a small and private one is not. And so it goes on to the very colour of our dresses and their shape and texture. Thus men are ever ready and eager to define the world for themselves and to show somehow or other that they do not belong to it—that they are not worldly. Is it any wonder that men who avow themselves "men of the world," should laugh at such reasoning as this, and tell us "It is in vain you talk to us of not being worldly and that you stand aloof from us and shun us, because, as you say, we are worldly, and yet when you come to speak one amongst the other, you are each in turn condemned and acquitted by each other of the very worldliness for which you find fault with us. Define for us what *is* the world before you bid us turn from worldly pursuits! The "world upon your lips is too much of a cant phrase." It is to be feared, brethren, that it is far too much of a cant phrase; that there is in connection with it too much of what is not only merely conventional but exceedingly dangerous, because there can be nothing so dangerous to real morality and real religion as a conventional morality and conventional religion. When we begin with making trifles of sins men will come to think that great sins are no worse than trifles. There must be, brethren, for our sake and for the sake of those we would win to Christ, some better and deeper knowledge of what is worldly if we are to permit the word upon our lips at all.

Let us try then if we can find some better definition, some deeper idea of the World and worldliness than this. Let us see if we can find out just that very aspect of the world that presented itself to the first disciples. Let us take for instance the Apostle John as he looked out upon the world and saw that the Kingdom of God and the World were in sharpest contrast. What was the peculiarity of Paganism? You will say it was idolatry. And wherein lay the sin of the idolater? It was not merely or chiefly in worshipping other deities than the one true God. The sin of the idolater lay in this, that he worshipped the whole world, the creature in the place of the Creator. His sin and misery lay in this, not that he worshipped Jupiter, or Venus, or Minerva, or Pluto—the god of force, the goddess of pleasure, the goddess of wisdom or the god of wealth;—it was not this, but that he worshipped the forces of power, love, wisdom, and pleasure in this world, and worshipped them as the only forces and powers which He acknowledged, and as the only good things that existed for him. This world was for him his all and all. The other world, if he thought of it all, was a shadowy, unreal, dreary place in which he had no abiding city, and for which his soul and heart never cried out, because there was nothing there to satisfy him. This world was for him all that he loved, lived and cared for. The very existence of the man was centred in this world. When he died he was snatched away from it, repining at the cruelty of the gods that had robbed him of all he counted worth living for. And the result was that man became the slave of the world he worshipped. He did not possess the world, but the world possessed him. He did not, he could not overcome the world, the world overcame and mastered him. And so he became forceful, or cunning, or lustful, just according to the bent of his nature, according as he gave himself up to be the mere servant of this or that part, this or that section of the world for which he lived. This was the Pagan idea of the world.

And now, what is the Christian idea of the world that stands in distinct antagonism to the idea of Paganism? It is this, that we worship the Creator rather than, and instead of the creature. It is this, that instead of the falsehood that the world is man's world which ends in man being the slave of the world, we proclaim the Truth that the world is God's world which ends in man being made the real Master of the world. The idea the Christian Church has in trust for man is this, that the world and all upon it were made and are redeemed by a loving Father, and man is the son of that Father, the rightful lord of this world and the heir of better worlds. The world is not his God. The world is to be enjoyed, is to be mastered, is to be subdued, is to be possessed by its lord and master—man, in the name of its maker and its ruler God. It is this and this alone which gives to manhood its real dignity, and to each one of us a real escape from the dominion and tyranny of the forces of Nature. It is this, we are not their's but they are our's. See how, at once, this frees man from the dominion of this present world. See how it brings to bear upon this world, that, and that alone, which can deliver man from the mastery, the wants, the hopes, the fears, and the low ambitions of the world in which he must, otherwise, live for it alone. It brings to bear on this world the very purity of the other world; it brings in rivalry to the passions which make man give himself to this world, as its slave, that one deep, absorbing, overmastering, passion, if he will but suffer it to overcome us; the passion of the love of God which sets man free from the love of the world.

The "world" then, is any one of God's works enjoyed or possessed without God, be it what it may—the world contemplated without that counterpoise in the other world which exists and was meant to exist to prevent us being the slaves of this. And without this love that lifts a man above this present world, he must, whether Pagan or Christian, become necessarily the slave of the world, the subject of its rules, the very servant of its whims, and its caprices; he becomes the very "man of the world" in the very fullest sense of the word, not daring to be his own master but the very servant, not even of the world in its largest and best sense but of that little fragment of the World and of Society to which he happens to belong. In this great world of London, for instance, how many are the little worlds in which men and women live separate and apart from each other—the Commercial world; the Literary world; the Fashionable world; the Legal world; the Political world. Each one of them is a little prison house for the man who belongs to it and it alone, out of which he has not the strength, if he had the wish, to make his way. He becomes the very bond-slave of his own little world—his synagogue from which exclusion were to him a sort of death. The sentence of exclusion, of the political man from his Party, of the fashionable man from his Society, of the man of any one of those worlds is a very casting forth out of paradise—the man goes forth not knowing where to go, ashamed and wretched. And so we live, every one of us, or are in danger of living in the merest slavery of the world to which we belong. And what will set us free? The truth and the truth alone, that teaches each one of us that we are redeemed and immortal spirits, telling us that we belong, not to ourselves, or our party, or our world, but to the God in heaven that made, and will judge, and hath redeemed us. This alone gives a man the courage and the strength of self-asertion which comes forth out of the very depths of self-sacrifice and humiliation before his Lord and Master to rise up and in His name—in the name of His law, and in the power of His might, to defy all the smaller laws, and break through the stringent customs, and brave the hostile opinions of the world in which he lives. And the man who cannot do this is not yet made free with the glorious liberty of the Son of God. He is overcome *by* the world—he has not yet learned to overcome the world. This then you see, brethren, is the spirit in which Christians should live in the world and yet not of it; a citizen of it in the best sense of the word and yet one whose citizenship and conversation are in another world.

And yet there is another side to this truth, which we must not forget. When we speak of the Christian living in defiance of, and as it were in antagonism to the world, we must not forget that this is not to be a sullen and bitter defiance of the world, not an unloving or unkind, or selfish emancipation from the world, but a loving and brother-like one. In whose name are we to overcome the world? In His name who said—"Behold? I have overcome the world." And how was it that He overcame the world? By living in that world and by dying for it. He overcame it, not in the fierceness of a bitter hostility, but He overcame it by the might of self-sacrificing love, overcame it by the death in which He gave Himself for it. He is overcoming it by that ascending and descending light, by which He still works in it to overcome all its opposition to Himself. Yes, brethren, it is in no spirit of isolation and fanaticism; it is no spirit of hard, morose, puritanism, that the Christian is to contemplate the world that God has made. He is not to be overcome by that world, he is to overcome it. *But in his contest with it he must remember that he is contending with that very world which God so loved,* that He sent His only Son that He might die for it. Never should we Christians permit our necessary antagonism to the evil that is in the world to weaken or chill in our heart in the very least degree, the deepest brotherly sympathy with all portions of the world. Even whilst we are contending against its laws and asserting our own freedom against its customs and practices; aye, even whilst we may be braving its hostility or enduring its persecution, we must brave or endure it in the spirit of Him, the loving, and self-sacrificing Saviour, who said, I have overcome the world.

And so, brethren, in this spirit and in this spirit only can we assert at once our Christian freedom from the tyranny of the world, and our Christian freedom from that small but hard tyranny of sectarian superstition, the puritanism that would bid us overcome the world not in the manly spirit of loving Christian brotherhood; but shrink and flee from and rail at the world in the narrow and sullen spirit of those who at once fear it and are ignorant of it. In this way and this way only can we hope to overcome the world, as each one of us finds for himself or herself this one broad rule to govern at once their discovery of, and their responsibility to the world, wherever it may be, that "the world" is anything which we have or seek to have without God, and that our antagonism to the world is just the assertion of our sonship to God, and the desire of overcoming that world for God, I say, as we learn this for ourselves, so we do also learn what ought to be the very idea of the existence of the Church of Christ in the world. What each one of us ought to be in our own home, and our own society, *that* the Church of Christ is to be in the world. The Church, for instance, is to be in this our own country, a witness for the supremacy and sovereignty of God, a testimony, and a constant and bold testimony against the errors, the mistakes and the sins of the age in which it lives. The Church, above all things, is to take heed to the command of Scripture, "Be ye not conformed to this world," because, brethren, the world is ever clamouring that the Church shall conform itself to it. From the days of old when our Lord compared the world of His day to the children in the market-place, who marvelled that the prophet who passed by, danced not to their piping, and mourned not to their lamenting saying, "We have piped unto you and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you and ye have not lamented," from then till now the world has ever demanded the compliance and subserviency of the Church. And this is the case more so in the present day than ever. What is the cry that is for ever ringing in the ears of the preachers of the Gospel, and teachers of the people in this day? What is it that is flaunted in our eyes in the leading columns of our papers or our periodicals? Is it not a lament that the Church is not in harmony and will not put herself in harmony with the "Spirit of the Age?" Are we not told that this is the great weakness of modern Christianity, that it is out of harmony with the wants, and the knowledge, and the spirit of the age? Is not the cry from the world to the Church still "conform to the world;" be one with the spirit of the age. The Spirit of the Age! Since when has it become the disciples and the prophets of the crucified One, to make themselves in conformity with the spirit of the age. Was He altogether in harmony with the spirit of His age, against Whom the multitude that heard Him took up stones to stone Him, Who cried, Woe! in the streets of Jerusalem, for the sins, and errors and ingrained prejudices of the people of His day. Was He altogether in harmony with the spirit of His age when He knit together the small cords of His scourge that He might drive out those whom the spirit of the age had induced to make the Temple ring with the clink of their money changing. Was it in the spirit of the age that His feet walked the *Via Dolorosa* amidst the sobs of the few and the execrations of the many. Was it in the spirit of the age that He hung upon the Cross and heard the taunting spirit of the age bid Him come down from that Cross that men might believe upon Him? No, not so was it that the great Founder and Master of Christianity dealt with the Age in which He lived. Nor was it in the spirit of the age that His disciples went forth, taking their very lives in their hands, and braving and enduring martyrdom. It was not altogether in the spirit of the age that the Christian martyr stood in the presence of the infuriated multitude shrieking "The Christians to the Lions!" Not altogether in the spirit of the age did they live and die, "who were persecuted and stoned; who were sawn asunder; who were tempted and wandered about in sheep skins and goat skins; being destitute, tormented, afflicted, of whom the world was not worthy." They did not live and die in the spirit of the age. They lived, and they died in the fear of the Living God, in whose name they spoke to the Age, and in whose name, by the very patience of their suffering and the faithfulness of their testimony they overcame the age in which they lived. It *is not* the duty of the Church—it never was the duty of the Church to conform herself to the spirit of the age. It *is* the duty of the Church to instruct the age, to reform the age, to rebuke the age if need be. And yet Oh! how deeply and intensely it is the duty of the Church, although not to conform to the spirit of the age, to understand her age, to sympathise with her age, to be in very deed a dweller amongst men, a friend and companion by each home and hearth, if possible, even like the Son of Man who came eating and drinking and sitting at good men's feasts, the cheerful, kindly, yet solemn, wise, tender, faithful, loving friend of man. The Church is never to adapt her dogma to the Philosophy of the age, but woe be to her if she cannot clearly discern the very point at which the dogma does comes into contact with that philosophy, and as far as possible harmonize them! The Church is never to yield to the cries of the age, but woe betide her if she cannot understand and feel them! The Church is never to give a stone to those who cry for bread, but woe be to her if she cannot distinguish clearly the very bread of Heaven she has to give them. The Church is not to stand aside in ignorant isolation and impatience, at the progress of the world, she is not to cry to the world from out of the cloister with an angry and impatient railing, as the world with its busy throng marches past the very place where it dwells. It is to go into the streets and marts where men meet, it is to go forth as the disciples went of old, into the porch to dispute with the philosophers, and into the streets to reason with the common people, it is to go forth wherever men are, and in the name of Her Divine Master, to say with a deeper meaning infinitely, than it ever had in the lips of him who first said it, "We are human and there is nothing in, or of our age, that we cannot count estranged from us." The mission of the Church is to be in the world, and yet not of it, to be of *our* day, and yet of *all* days and of all ages, having truths deeper, facts greater, laws and powers mightier to speak of and to reveal, than even the facts, or the truths and laws which Science is revealing to us now. In this way, and in this way only can the Church ever hope to overcome the world.

And as it is with the Church so should it be, above all things, with the ministers of the Church. For, what the Church should be to the world, that the ministry should be to the Church; the very soul and conscience in the body, the very salt in the system, without which the mass grows corrupt, the body dies, and all tends to decay and corruption. Yes, the ministers of the Church above all others we say,—and you would be the first to remind us if we did not say it,—should be the first to remind us of, and realize this idea of the Church that overcomes the world. What is it brethren, you would desire that the ministers of your Church should be? Should they not be just these men who go forth in the might of those two principles of which I have just been speaking—allegiance to another world, and yet a deep love for this? Going forth to overcome the world. Should you not desire for your ministers and pastors, in the first place that they should be men altogether set free from, and placed above the tyranny of the world's customs, the world's laws; able for your sakes if not for their own to bid defiance to all and each of these; able boldly to rebuke vice, even though it should be your own vice, and expose false opinions, even though those opinions should be your own; that these men should go amongst you, as men who are conscious, and make you feel that they are conscious that they are charged with a Divine and supernatural mission, and that they are not—and God forbid that they ever should be so regarded by you or by others—that they are not the mere *accidents* of the Church—the mere natural outgrowth of a merely human society, but that they should hold with the deepest humility as regards themselves, an awful sense of the magnitude of their office and its tremendous responsibilities; that they should hold the conviction that directly from the Lord of the Church Himself, they have received by inheritance and hold in trust this command—"Go ye forth and make disciples of all nations! baptizing them in My name." Go and teach in My name. Go and win souls for Christ. Go and do that which others are not commissioned to do, but which I have sent you to do. It will be an evil day for the Church when its ministers ever have a lower idea of their mission than this—that they should be without a deep sense of the solemnity and awfulness, and high privilege of their calling. But you would wish more than this. You would wish not only that they should be men of deep spirituality of nature, and fervent, severed by that very spirituality from the infirmities and sins of the world, you would wish that they should not be worldly fashionable men, and yet you would wish that they should be kindly, companionable, sensible men of the "world" in the better sense of that word, and it has a better sense. You would not wish that your ministers in the Church should be ignorant fanatics, monks in the cloister, incapable of being the companions of the best and the highest in the land, at the same time that they were the helpful friends and consolers of the lowest and most needy. You would desire that the minister of the Church of England—the pastor of an English parish should be able to stand on a footing of equality with the very highest, and yet clasp in loving kindness the hand of the very lowest of his parishioners; and so help to bridge over those ever-yawning and widening chasms in our modern society, which seem to threaten never to close until we have cast into them one after another the most precious things in Church and State. You do desire this; for if you have a high standard of what the Christian minister ought to be—and you cannot have too high a one—you will wish that your ministers should come up to it. You would be ready enough, some are only too ready perhaps, to criticise the many cases in which the minister falls short of this, but I am sure, in all faith, that never was there a Church, which in the ideal of its minister, set forth more clearly and fully the high standard we have been speaking of, than the Church of England in our day; which does not sever the minister into a separate and sacerdotal class, forbidding him to ally himself with the Laity, by the ties of kindred and affection, a lonely isolated man knowing nothing of family and of home but as an intruder and a stranger. She permits and sanctions the position of a married clergyman, and yet she forbids him to engage in secular pursuits, and deprives him, by a strict and severe law of his benefice, if he does engage in any such pursuits. She requires him to separate himself from the cares of the world, and give himself entirely to the labours and duties of his pastorate. This is the ideal of a Christian minister in our Church. Not a man who has ceased to be a citizen, and yet a citizen ennobled and consecrated to the office of the ministry of Christ. This is the very ideal of our Church, and I make bold to say, that never in any Church in the world's history, and never at any time in the history of our Church, was that ideal more fully and largely realized, than it is at this moment. Amidst all that is said—harshly and bitterly said—in our day against the character of the spirituality of the clergy of the Church of England, we who know them on the large scale and have a right to speak, do most solemnly, as in the presence of God, declare that never was there a time in the history of the Church of England, when her clergy were more largely or more earnestly endeavouring to realize the true ideal and Type of the Christian minister. You may know here and there a pastor, who is careless and indifferent in the discharge of his duties, as you may know here and there a pastor who is diligent, earnest and devoted; but we who see them in the mass, know how very largely the diligent, pious, careful pastors outnumber the careless and indifferent. We are often astonished at seeing how earnestly, patiently, and nobly, many an English pastor goes labouring on, not in the eye of the world, and where he can be cheered by the world's applause, but in some small neglected, or little known parish or hamlet in the country; or some over-crowded parish in the city, in which the man's individual work is lost in its very vastness. These men are labouring day by day for many a weary year, not for the applause of men—that never reaches them—but for the sake of Him who died for men and overcame the world. And they too overcome the world; not as martyrs, and great confessors, and loud voiced prophets, who have the very greatness of their task to cheer and to stimulate them, but overcoming it in its most wearisome and depressing forms and scenes, as they go from house to house in the scattered country parish, amid the ignorance, the dulness, the stolidity, the sensuality, it may be, of the agricultural peasant; overcoming the world as they go from street to street, and cellar to cellar, and garret to garret of the over populated, sin haunted, and poverty stricken streets of our great cities—overcoming the vice, the misery, the sin, and the shame that are maddening and wearing out the lives and breaking the hearts of men and women by thousands around us. I say it is those who are called to meet the great mass of the clergy who have the right to testify, as I do this day, most solemnly before God, that your Church possesses in this day a body of pastors taking them all in all, never, I believe, excelled in earnestness and zeal, in high ideal of what a pastor's duty ought to be, and in earnest, if often failing efforts, to accomplish the great object of their mission. If this be so, brethren, what is your duty to these men. You fix a very high standard for them. *Do you ever help them to attain it?* Do you ever reach out your hands to enable them to reach out theirs? Do you think of them in your prayers? Amongst those who criticise the pastor most sharply, are probably those who do not pray for him at all. You know what a pastor ought to be. Do. you pray that God may "send His grace upon all bishops and curates, and all congregations committed to their charge?" Do you do this, and do you help them in the work of their parishes? Do you help them sufficiently in the wearying "service of tables" the first begging and then dispensing of charity that breaks down the strength, and wastes the time, and blunts and secularises, the spirit of our clergy until they are scarcely able to minister the word of God? Do you minister as you ought and might minister to their bodily necessities? There is nothing alien whatsoever, in that subject of ministering to the temporal necessities of the clergy, from that subject of which I have been speaking—their spiritual Ideal and the accomplishment of that ideal. Have you ever thought, do any of us ever sufficiently think of the deep knowledge of human nature, of the Divine wisdom that lies hid in that sentence of our Lord's when He speaks of that which "chokes the word and makes it unfruitful." He speaks not only of the "deceitfulness of riches" but of "the cares of this world." It is not *only*, it is not, perhaps *chiefly*, wealth that makes men unspiritual and worldly, there is the worldliness that comes from bitter poverty, there is that cowering and shrinking from the approach of disaster; that dread of the shame which comes in this our wealthy country from poverty; that fear of public opinion, that wearing, carking care at the heart, that makes it impossible for many and many a pastor to rise up to the height of spiritual thought and spiritual life, just because the mean, petty degrading cares of the world are breaking his heart and bowing him down to the very earth. Yes, it is very easy for you of the Laity, and comparatively easy for us in higher and more prosperous places in the Church, to set before the poor hard-working country pastor a very high ideal of study and literary culture, and self-denial, and tell him he ought to be the very mainspring of spiritual life in his parish, when that mainspring is crushed and pressed into very helplessness by the grinding pressure of poverty, and daily care, and anxiety. How is he to go into his parish to lift up and cheer the hearts of the suffering; when the poor man may be bearing in his own heart a deeper pang of suffering than the one he goes out to help and encourage? How is he to have leisure and thought for study, whose heart is taken up with how he shall find bread for his children, or how they shall find bread when he is snatched away from them, and the cares and duties of his parish have all but worn away the life he has given to the service of the Church, and he has failed to make anything like a provision for his family; and not only failed to make an adequate provision, but sometimes, as I have known in many instances, been compelled to sacrifice the provision he has made for his widow and orphans, and so these must be cast forth upon the cold charity of the world? These cares weigh very heavy at the heart of many a clergyman, who does not show it to you when he meets you as the friend, the companion, the pastor who hears all your sorrows, and is consulted by you about your difficulties, and then goes home and shuts the door of his closet, and pours out to his Father in heaven, what he would not for the very world, tell even to the dearest upon earth, the sorrows and the cares that are eating into his very heart, and hindering his life and ministry in the Church.

And now we do ask you for his sake, and Christ's sake, to think of these things. *Half of the evil in the world is wrought from want of thought and not from want of feeling.* It is because you do not know, and cannot know the painful instances which we know of clerical poverty; because you do not know of the sad scenes that follow upon the death of many and many a clergyman, whose position in life has been at best but a modest competency, who leaves his children in the direst poverty; it is because you cannot know all these things that we are here to put them before you this day. This Institution for which I plead with you, is an institution established for helping in time of need distressed clergymen, and making some provision for their widows and orphans. And you surely will not be unwilling —I do not suppose that of you—to help and help largely those who are living for you and working for you. You will send to them through me this day, a message of good cheer. You will say to them, "In the midst of your cares and anxieties, you who are labouring and living for us, we have cared for you in the name of our Divine Master; and we send you this message, we give you back His words—words of cheer to His first Apostles—'In the world ye shall have tribulation,' for the cares and the sorrows and the suffering of this world are the common lot of all, but 'Be of good cheer' for the love of Christ your Master has in us overcome the selfishness, the carelessness, and the thoughtlessness of the world—'Be of good cheer for the sake of Him who has overcome the world for us, for the love of Him who died for you and for us, and Whose messengers and servants to us ye are—in His dear Name we send you this gift as a relief to your anxiety and a help to your care; and every blessing and gift through us, are from the Lord, Whose you are, and whom you serve. 'Be of good cheer for He has overcome the world.'"

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 29.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,

(*SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, D.D.*)

PREACHED AT ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, PICCADILLY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 28, 1872.

"*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.*"—St. John xiv, 18.

All through these forty days, my brethren, the Church lingers in the appointed Gospels, over the words recorded by St. John, as spoken by our blessed Lord on the night of His betrayal. And there is no wonder, I think, why the instinct of the Church has so done. Elsewhere, when we come to think of it, the words recorded as spoken by our blessed Lord to His immediate disciples are comparatively speaking, few, disjointed, and interrupted continually by external circumstances. "Ye cannot bear it now," that was the rule with Him as to the many things He had to say to them; the tenderness of His heart prevented His pouring out even into those ears of His beloved disciples what from His knowledge of their spiritual condition He knew they could not yet receive. But for this one time, we learn from the records of the Gospel all this is changed. He and His were alone. The carping Sadducee and the calumniating Pharisee were both now away. The world of sorrow which followed Him so closely all His life through, that too, was now withdrawn to a distance. He and they were alone together. Even the traitor had withdrawn. He looked round and saw only those of whose hearts He was sure; only those to whose earthly love that perfect human heart clung with such tenderness and affection. St. John was leaning upon His breast at supper time, the faithful ones were round about Him, His forecasting-eye saw all the sorrow that was coming upon them, and He felt rather for what they, than He Himself, was about to endure. And so here He is the originator of the discourse. There are a few interrupting sentences of the disciples, but for the main part it is the pouring out of the heart of Jesus—the pouring it out for His own Church through all time under circumstances which were quite sure to draw out of that heart the very deepest of its strength, because they were His last words. I am sure that some of us, very likely most of us, know what last words are. How, when the life of the beloved one is about to run itself out and when the dying one knows it; and when one or two—it may be but one—watching over that bed, know it too, how the words are unlike any words that have ever yet been spoken in the life of love. How they savour to us of prophecy. How they reach out into all our after life. How they come back to us again and again in that after life, the very tone in which they were uttered, the very look which accompanied them speaking to us from the past into the present, and casting as it were, a light out of the unseen and unsearchable into the daily life we are leading. He knew they were His last words, and we may venture to say even of Him that, the spirit of prophecy resting on Him, His soul awoke to loftier utterances and to deeper predictions than He had given them before. And so we find if we look closely into those words, utterances concerning the great mystery of the faith, the deep foundations upon which it rests—the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, their mutual relationship to one another, that which followed from these relationships towards those He came to redeem. We find all these given with a clearness which never from His lips and His heart had been uttered before. The utterance is from the Eternity of the eternal world, of what He was in the beginning, of what the Father was to Him and He to the Father, and the blessed Spirit to both. Words upon which the heart of the Church has been nourished from that day to this. Words which under the teaching of the Spirit, have been gathered up into creeds; words which we hand on now from generation to generation as the guiding marks of what we are to believe, as the very foundations of the spiritual life we are to live.

But one subject above all others, seems to me to run through these words ever working up as it were, again and again through the mere surface subject showing that it was the one deep idea that was in the mind of Christ — His coming separation from them; His going away; His coming again, and the relation which was involved in the going away and in the coming again to them, and to His own, through all time.

Just for a moment look at this, and you will see, I think, what I mean. There is again and again, a word dropped to make them bear it better when distinctly stated—the approaching separation, the fact that they should see Him for a time no more, when He went to the Father. But then this was accompanied evermore with the promise of a return. And observe, my brethren, the return is spoken of as a speedy return; as an abiding return; as giving them a presence which would be more perfect than anything they had yet enjoyed; as giving them a presence which would be specially more operative upon them, more quickening, more enlivening, more transforming, more satisfying. If you run through the words of this chapter I think you will see it at a glance; the living in Him, His living in them, the seeing all things, the seeing the Father, the knowing the love of the Father, the returning His love, the having a new principle of life within them which should be His, living in them, and then at last the consummation of all in His being with them for ever. No doubt, as is ever the case in prophecy, the same words reach on into long perspectives of fulfilment, vista after vista. You cannot say that the words do not apply in their completeness to their first fulfilment; but it is perfectly certain that they apply equally, if not with increasing fulness to each successive fulfilment, to the very end; each successive fulfilment, adding something to the first. And we may remark that this applies specially to this promise of His coming again. There were three great fulfilments of the words that they should see Him again, and that their hearts should rejoice. Three great fulfilments. The first was His coming again. The very reason why this subject is so brought before us at this season; the coming again in the risen body with the marks of the passion to teach them what they had been before unable to learn, to found a ministry amongst them, to breathe upon them, to give them that which was to enable them to lengthen out His own ministry as well as to keep alive His life in their own words. This was the first, but there was one immediately beyond this. His coming after His ascension into heaven by the Spirit. The two are so blended together in this verse, that it is impossible to separate them wholly one from the other. The coming again after a little while, glides ever into the coming again by the Holy Ghost which is to bring Him home to each one of us; and this in its turn leads on, and continually passes into the third fulfilment, His coming again to gather all His own to Himself, the blessed, the undying hope which makes life tolerable; yea! which makes it pleasant to every one that believes in Him.

Now, I say, there are these three in the same words and this is the law concerning them; each one is a greater promise than the one before; each one gives a higher presence to those to whom the presence is promised, than the first fulfilment of it gave.

Look at the first of these. His coming amongst them during the forty days. There is no bound to the blessedness that it was to them. The way in which it scattered all their fears, built up again their hopes, confirmed their faith, made them understand His past words, gave them the first idea of there being a presence of His which was not to be limited by the ordinary accident of His bodily presence as before; for that presence was in no way to be compared for its blessedness with the presence that succeeded it. That presence was, in the first place, short-lived. It more or less filled them with fear; they understood nothing about its law. It was suddenly broken off and they did not know whether it would be renewed or not. He was with them and He left them, and they knew not whether He would come to them again. There were all these characteristics of what we may term, to them, an accidental presence, He was with one, but not at the same time with others. He came to the eleven, but when He came He was not with the two going to Emmaus. Whilst He was with the two going to Emmaus He was not with the twelve. The law governing this presence was a dark unrevealed in many respects, unsatisfactory law. All blessed when it yielded Him to them, but leaving them still in doubt as to what was to come after it. Compare all that, with what did come after it, with the presence when the Holy Spirit was given. Think how far grander really, and more blessed that new presence was. In the first place because their hearts were so differently prepared to receive it; because the spirit dwelling in them was able, without fear, to welcome Him. No more being afraid it was a spirit. No more question whether it was He Himself, the receptivity of their souls under this gift of the Holy Ghost had been so largely increased that they upon their part, were ready to receive the faint touch of the light which fell upon their hearts and impressed upon them the image of the Lord their Redeemer. And then on His part too, consider how very far higher this new presence was. First, because it was so much more real. I ask you to let that thought sink into your heart, because I believe it is one specially needed at this day and that it is one quite full of holy faith, hope and charity where it is received. The presence by God the Holy Ghost was, indeed, a more real presence, even than the presence when they saw Him after the resurrection in the risen power. And why? Because of the besetting temptation to think Matter real, and Spirit unreal, which I think is one of the great temptations of the present day, the belief, or at least the coming in a certain way to admit to ourselves that when we say Spiritual presence we mean, not a *real* presence of Him, of whom we speak, but an *impression* made upon our spirits concerning Him, the imagination taking it up, the feelings awakening, the heart quickening, as when we read the letter of an absent friend, and say, "He seemed to be present with me when I read that letter." And so, because there is the absence of the material presence we come to think that the material presence was more truly real than His presence by the spirit with us. But after all, brethren, what is the most real existence of which we know? Not the body but the spirit. Who is the centre of all things? The Everlasting God. And what is the very first that we know about Him? That He is *immaterial*. Then the most real centre, mark you, is not that which is material but that which is immaterial. Matter, to say the most of it, is but the outward garment which it has pleased the Almighty for wise purposes to throw around the true being—the spirit. We know so little about it, we can hardly say whether it is more than an impression upon our own minds and senses, as we call them. We know that the spirit is in us. We know from revelation that God is a Spirit and therefore the most real presence of the Lord was not when He reappeared and made Himself manifest to the bodily senses of His disciples with, as yet, a very imperfect communication to their spirit, but it was when the Eternal Spirit had quickened their spirit that it became fit for communication with the Eternal Spirit. The one was, so to speak, the communication of sense, the other was the communication of the Presence by the power of the Everlasting Spirit of God. I say a far more real presence to every one of them than anything that was allowed to them before the Resurrection—Yea! after the Resurrection. I think we cannot have read the [Gospels with any attention at all without feeling how always before the Resurrection there was something in the disciples which, as it were, kept them at a distance from the Lord. They could not understand Him. They did not even like to say to Him anything which they longed to ask. He could say to them, "have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not seen me, Phillip?" There was this barrier between them and Him. Even Simon Peter would beckon to St. John to ask the question he wanted to put. At other times they would go disputing on many things and longing to ask Him, but not daring to do it. There was a distance between Him and them; but when the presence of the spirit came there was this intimate closeness between Him and them, "I in them and they in Me." Compare the Epistles of St. Paul when he is speaking of his own inward life in Christ, with anything we read in the gospels down to the time of the Ascension, and you will see at once how the very inmost web of the Apostle's soul is shot through and through by these lines of the Life of Christ, mingling so with the lines of his life that the two could not be separated the one from the other, and evinced in that declaration of his that neither life nor death, nor things in heaven, nor things in earth, nor under the earth should separate him from the love of God which was in Christ Jesus. Those declarations of his that to him to live was Christ; that not he lived, but Christ lived in him. What an intimacy is there! What a closeness and communication of the presence of the Lord to him is there in all this which was never known to him before.

Then again, this Presence was not only more real and more intimate, but it was more abiding. The other presence was liable to separation. They were on the sea of Galilee when the storm broke upon them—and Jesus was on the land—poor souls! in their terror-stricken solitude. But now the Presence was abiding. No accident could interrupt it, the world could not shake it, the heart might rise up to Him in the midst of the fires of martyrdom. It was the union of spirit with spirit bringing the spirit of the man into unity with the spirit of the Lord by the Holy Ghost the comforter. And of course, it was therefore all the more sustaining than that other presence had ever been, because each one could turn to it at any moment. He had not to go a journey to be with Mary and Martha in their house; Mary and Martha could turn then to Him by the Spirit which united them to Him.

And so observe one thing further, this Presence was far more universal. The Lord incarnate, according to the laws that He has been pleased to give to that body which He took, was not in one place and another at the same time. He went from one to another; comforted and healed one here, and then went on His way to Jerusalem, and met the blind man outside the city gate and healed him. He was not with one and the other at the same time, but the presence of the spirit is the presence of every member of the body of Christ, with each one wherever he may be as completely and entirely as with another; with the dying child that has been taught to believe in Him, and with the veteran saint in the midst of the hard conflict with sin. The presence of the spirit is a universal presence, and the word in my text in Greek most briefly expresses this. It is a great pity that it is lost in the English. In the Greek, it is not "I will not leave you orphans—I will come to you;" but it is "I come to you." It is that wonderful tense in the Greek, the universal present-future—"I am always coming. Now, I am coming to you; I am coming to another; I am coming to the end—I will not leave you comfortless. Ever to the end I am coming to you."

And now, brethren, I have asked you to notice these words to the first disciples for this one reason, that this is the Presence given to you and to me. If our life in Christ is true, this is His presence with us. If in any measure this presence is not with us, then our life is not of the true pattern of the disciples of Jesus. Remember the mystery of this presence. Ever in the Church for every believing soul, and yet discriminating in its visitation, because it is written in this very passage, "whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him." Men tell you, "I cannot believe in this Presence and I therefore disbelieve the Revelation," when the Revelation on its surface bears to the soul the notice, "Whom the world cannot receive because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him."

Well then, there is in this, I think, grounds for great self-examination. First of all it is the presence of Christ with us, not a mere reading in the Gospel; that does not come up even to His first presence amongst the Jews. Not a talking about Him; the Sadducees and Pharisees talked a great deal about Him. Not the mere bearing His name, as the disciple Judas did, and went out into the darkness when the Lord began to speak these things. Need I say that this is the whole secret of the true Christian life—Christ in us. Nothing less will do. No intellectual skill, no party zeal, no determination to put down doctrines we disapprove of, no decencies of external form Nothing! The road lies here, the Presence by the spirit of Christ within us. And then, my brethren, I think the second thought which this ought to bring to us is the blessedness of this Christian life. And yet how do every one of us live below it; letting things torment and distress us, letting things shake our hearts and keep us low, which, if we did but remember this truth, Christ by the Holy Ghost is with me, is present beside me, close, intimate, ready to receive me, to sustain me and to gather up my tears. We should live so differently. Oh! brethren, if we did but live a little more of that life. We cannot keep intimate company with even a nobler-minded man than ourselves without gaining something from it. And if we would but live the life that this presence would lead us into, what a daily lifting up it would be of the relations of our own life into the grand dimensions of the life of the Son of God.

And so, in this very chapter; remember how it is constantly united to this, "He that hath My commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me." This transforming power of the Presence is what is evermore brought before us, and while that, of course, is a thing to make us examine ourselves, it is the most comforting thing in the world to know that that Presence is by us, and if we will seek to keep it alive and to live near it, that it will transform us. I suppose that we all do really know, though we shut our eyes to it, more of the faults of our own characters than other people know. And a sad sight it is to look at them. But then there is this blessed hope, yea! that His presence is with me; His presence is within me; He will transform me; He will not let me groan for ever under these weaknesses which I hate. Oh! blessed hope, if we will but make it ours, of this Christian life.

And if we wish to make this blessedness ours, we must remember the one condition is, the living here upon earth setting Him as a pattern before us; enlightened by the beams of His presence within us. And so, each day, when any opportunity comes, of conforming ourselves to Him, the setting ourselves with prayer and self-denial to do so, is the secret of the Christian life.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. W. W. ENGLISH, M.A.,

PREACHED AT GREAT WOLLASTON, SHREWSBURY,

ON TRINITY SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1872.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."—Job xi, 7-9.

I have chosen this text to say a few words to-day upon the subject of the Divine nature—how we come to know anything about it. Being Trinity Sunday we said the Athanasian Creed, and that Creed declared the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be "incomprehensible," something that we cannot understand though we may fully believe in.

I shall be able to show you without being very difficult to follow, I hope, that all we know about God is simply to help us to *perform our duty*—that nothing has been revealed to us to gratify curiosity—but quite sufficient to make us understand what God requires of us.

In our little sphere upon earth, with our finite powers, it is manifest that we cannot know much about God. It may be doubted whether any revelation could bring down to our minds a full and complete knowledge of Deity. We all know the difficulty that is felt in conveying our thoughts intelligently to the mind of a child—how we have to pick and choose our words (and even use them in a sense different from that which they commonly bear) when we try to make ourselves understood. But the difference between the mind of God who is infinite in all His perfections, and the mind of man, who is finite in all his powers, is but very faintly shadowed forth by the parent and child. The difference between God and man is infinite; how very difficult, then, in the nature of things must it be for any words, or anything we know, to set forth what is true of God? How can man possibly see Him who fills heaven and earth with His presence? How can man understand or comprehend Him who sits upon the throne of the universe? Can he weigh the mountains in scales, or the hills in a balance? "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea."

If we cannot hope then to gain a full knowledge of God *as* God, we need not wonder if the mysteries of the Sacred Trinity are found to baffle men's minds. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are all far removed from our grasp, our comprehension, not only as regards their nature, but also as to their work. The revelation we have of God in the Bible is just such as we might expect under the circumstances, that is to say, one that for all practical purposes may inform man of his duty and responsibility, but nothing more. If we wish to know God in a measure and the duties we owe to Him, we shall find in Holy Scripture all the instruction we need for this purpose, but nothing over. We shall neither find the nature of God fully revealed nor His secret decrees made known to us farther than is necessary to guide man in the path of duty.

I propose, then, by way of illustrating the text to sketch out the method in which God is made known to us in the Bible. We shall find that what is revealed has been gradually unfolded to mankind, and that the knowledge which has been conveyed is exactly suited to our finite minds, and has relation to human duty; but in no sense does it make us fully acquainted with God. Perhaps the Bible or that revelation which God has been pleased to give us differs from all worldly systems of religion in nothing more than in this, that while all worldly systems of philosophy and of false religions have pretended to explain the nature of God, and then upon their pretended explanations, have grounded their notions of human duty ; the Bible has ever sought to inculcate the notions of God which it gives us, by setting before mankind, the duties which He requires at our hands. It is in fact in the *works* of God, and by the *ways* of God, that the Bible everywhere teaches what it does profess to teach, respecting the Divine nature.

Let me illustrate this principle. When in the state of man's innocency, God would teach Adam the Divine *wisdom* and *power ;* how did He set about it ? He simply brought to Adam " every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air," that he might see their excellence and admire the wisdom and power of their Maker, and then give them names.

Again when God would teach Adam the Divine *goodness*—another attribute—He placed him in the garden and surrounded him with all that heart could wish. And when He would teach Adam his own *dependence,*—a most necessary lesson for him to learn,—He gave him two trees, one the tree of Life, which we may call the sacramental tree, whose fruit he was to eat and live for ever ; and the other, the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whose fruit he was not to touch, for in the day that he did eat thereof, death was to root itself in his frame.

Here then the knowledge of God was conveyed only in so far as it concerned human duty ; no full revelation of the Divine nature but a knowledge of the one living and true God in these simple examples of duty.

After the fall of man a further revelation was needed, the *justice* of God in punishing sin was to be made known. And how was this attribute revealed ? Just as the Divine wisdom, and power, and goodness, had been before in the time of man's innocency. That withering desolating sentence which dried up all the springs of life, and blasted human happiness on earth, was accompanied with driving out the man and the woman from that pleasant spot where a smiling Providence had placed them, and planting the flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way of the tree of life.

Nor do we find any revelation afterwards in patriarchal times of the nature of God different from this. The great scheme of human Redemption was not propounded like some grand system of philosophy in a set form, and under set phrases; it was first revealed by *sacrifice,* that which man could handle, and see, and do. The preaching of Noah, the building of the Ark, the Deluge of Water, the overthrow of the Cities of the Plain—all these historical facts, seen of men at the time, were revelations of God in the same practical form as before, and connected with human duty.

And if we come to the choice of one nation; the election of Jacob's posterity; the bringing out of Egypt and the placing in the land of Canaan of the people of Israel; the same mode of revealing God is followed. The knowledge of God so far as it was necessary for man to guide him in the path of duty, was all but lost in the earth; one nation therefore was chosen from the midst of nations—this race of people was planted in a particular spot, Palestine, favoured with an established ministry, a service prescribed in all its minuteness by God Himself—the revealed will of God as we have it in the Old Testament was deposited with this race of people; what laws and revelations Divine wisdom thought good to make were made to the nation of the Jews, and yet we find all this was made to centre in *human duty.* The Ten Commandments written upon tables of stone, had this one common feature that *man's duty to God and to his neighbour* was taught in them all. In none of them is the curiosity of the human mind gratified in respect of the Divine nature or essence itself.

Now in these practical developments of the Divine nature, not only the Jews, the chosen and favoured people of God, but the *whole world* was to be instructed. Israel was as it were the centre from which the knowledge of God, so far as it regarded human duty, was to go out. At the great festivals such as that of Pentecost—answering to our Whitsuntide—there came up to Jerusalem " devout men from every nation under heaven. Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in

Mesopotamia, and in Judæa, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes, and Arabians," all these were to learn what God is, and what He expects man to do, by means of such practical revelations of His character and perfections as I have described.

But there remained as yet the fuller and more complete revelation of the Divine nature which God designed to give. The whole revelation thus far may be regarded as preparatory to that which follows—it prepared the way for a full and complete display of the Divine nature. And how was this made? Was it made in a less practical form than heretofore? Did God manifest Himself to the human race in "the fulness of time" in all the mysteriousness, in all the incomprehensibleness of the Divine nature? No; if anything the last finishing stroke was the most practical of all. Instead of entering into the mysteries of the Divine nature and essence, which man could never fully comprehend, the Divine nature was fully *accommodated*, and brought down to human understandings in the person of Christ. "In Him dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." The Divine nature, through Him, assumed human form, performed the law of God, shewing us in a higher and still more practical sense than before, what God is, and what He requires of us, by observing the law, walking in the path prescribed for man, and thus presenting mankind with a living example of the Divine power, the Divine wisdom, the Divine goodness, the Divine mercy, and the Divine love. In Christ all the Divine attributes and perfections met—God was made known to man, not as to what He is in Himself, His nature and essence, but as to what His moral perfections are, and what He requires at the hands of man. Thus we see that the scheme of Providence disclosed the nature of God *by practical* exhibitions—there is nothing about theory, nothing for man to speculate upon, human duty was laid down from first to last from Genesis to the book of Revelation—the duties of man were laid down first, and he was left to gather from these practical exhibitions of the Divine will what God Himself is. It is therefore from God's *works* and God's *ways* that we get our knowledge of Him. And indeed, no other scheme could have satisfied us so well. Men plain and unlearned can read the duties of life in these revelations which God has given, but few could have done the same had we been favoured with hard words about God's nature and essence.

And I think we may draw one or two very practical and useful lessons ourselves from this inductive method of teaching theology. We should never for instance make haste to build doctrines upon single texts, or particular phrases in the Sacred Scriptures. Every separate passage no more contains of necessity a full and complete statement of religious truth than did one of these lessons on natural theology teach mankind what all the Divine attributes and perfections are.

And another lesson is this, that *human duty* being used by God throughout His dispensations as a means of revealing Himself, making known His nature and character, the first thought suggested to our minds, in regard to our own obligations should be how best to perform that duty. If religion had consisted of a system of doctrines for man to receive intellectually, then might we have expected a full revelation of these necessary truths from the first. But instead of this we find that religious knowledge was gradually unfolded, while human duty from the first was clearly laid down. Nowhere for upwards of 4,000 years do we find the mysteries of faith fully explained, but everywhere from the beginning do we find the *path of duty prescribed for man to walk in.*

Lastly, to review the line of thought pursued—the text was spoken by Zophar, one of Job's three friends—" Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea." These animating questions set forth in eloquent language the great truth that God's nature is "incomprehensible," as is the case too, with His ways in providence. And I have taken occasion to speak from this text upon the incomprehensible nature of God—the method of making known to man the Divine character and will—I have shewn that all the revelations of God in the Bible from Creation to the manifestation of Christ, who was Himself the "brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person," were but partial, and given in the practical form of lessons in human duty. I have drawn some lessons from this fact as to the error of building doctrines and opinions upon single texts or particular phrases, that speak only in part upon the subject or exhibit one side of it, and I have endeavoured to impress upon the mind, as a most important deduction that since God has taken this practical form of teaching us what He does respecting Himself, that human duty must always with us stand first in importance. And let us remember that part of the Divine essence and of the Divine work is specially to aid us in the performance of our duty; I refer to the person and work of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit was poured out in super-abundant measure on the day of Pentecost to aid the Apostles to perform a miraculous work, and with the Church that same Spirit abides still, to aid her members in whatsoever it shall please God to call them to do. Oh! then for a heart to be and do what He intends us all to be and do, to see Him as He has revealed Himself in His word, to love, honour, and obey Him, to honour His holy Name and His Word, and to serve Him truly all the days of our lives!

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN

[No. 30.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. FREDERICK GEO. LEE, D.C.L, F.S.A.,

Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth,

PREACHED AT ALL SAINTS', LAMBETH, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1872.

"*When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find* [*the*] *faith* [τὴν πίστιν] *on the earth?*"—St. Luke xviii, 8.

"*Behold I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.*"—Revelation iii, 11.

When Almighty God vouchsafed to send His Only-begotten Son to seek and to save the lost, the plan of redemption involved the setting up of an Universal Church, which, until the end of time, should witness to the mercy of the Eternal and the amazing love of His Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. This Church was formally instituted at Pentecost. God the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles in the upper chamber, and filled them to overflowing with His sevenfold gifts. Thus they spake with strange tongues, they received the power of working miracles, and became, in their corporate capacity, depositaries of Divine truth. To them was unfolded completely and perfectly all that was needful for the propagation of the Faith; they were instructed miraculously what to do, what to teach, how to act, what to aim at in their complicated and difficult warfare with the World, and in their mighty labour of overpowering the strongholds of the Evil One. And what was ordinarily given to the first Apostles was equally given in the main to their legitimate successors. The power of working miracles was markedly manifest for many generations, and men believe, and believe reasonably, that it exists still. At all events the faith of Christ was entrusted to His Church through the rulers to preserve carefully, define accurately and unerringly, and to hand down undefiled and unmutilated to the last ages of the world, so that all might hear, and each one be benifited. And by the Holy Ghost, Christ their Master was ever present with them; for the Blessed Paraclete is One with the Son as He is One with the Father, and the Son's gracious pledge and promise stood thus to His first Apostles:—"Lo I am with you all days," as it may be translated, "even unto the end of the world."

I. We know too well that this Faith was impugned and opposed again and again. Men set themselves up with craft and deliberation to contradict and overthrow the glad tidings of salvation, by evasions, false reasoning, wilful rejection of it, or open denial. Every evil weapon was laid hold of for the purpose, and no opportunity lost of resisting or corrupting it. Our Blessed Saviour's true Divinity and true Humanity were continually impugned from different points of view. Gnostics, Docetæ, Cerinthians, Nicolaitanes, in turn, did this. No sooner had the perturbances been quelled, arising from the propagation of one deadly error, than others of equal or deeper import were found to exist elsewhere. As the unchastened intellects of men, even of the wisest philosophers of old, could never find out God, so the vain and proud speculations of those who rejected Authority sometimes led Christian people into heresy and unbelief. Gnosticism, with all its dark tribe of fantastic but deadly errors, had to be met and cast out, for they destroyed the truth of the Incarnation. But Error was hydra-headed. As soon as one detail of falsehood was overcome and crushed, another arose in its place. The struggle was fierce and the trial severe, but none who believed in God could for a moment doubt the issue. For Christ was in the ship. The winds might rise and the tempest become furious, but He whose promise was sure, for Himself was Truth, would in due course, still the waters and stay the wildness of the storm. And so it always turned out.

Now here let us mark that the Truth of God, contained both in His written and unwritten Word was ever carefully preserved, and has been handed down always, even to the present day. False gospels and spurious epistles were continually circulated in the early Church, many of them bearing a certain resemblance to the true; but without an infallible authority, the one undivided Church, how could the faithful have avoided error, or how could Christians have been certain of having and knowing the Truth? The idea that men were to search after the faith themselves, sifting the good from the bad, each one selecting that which commended itself to his own changeable taste or varying sentiment, never existed. Such is a "fond thing vainly invented" in these latter days. For humble Christians, therefore, the Church of God filled with the Holy Ghost, was their unerring guide. By its Divine instrumentality men were taught what to believe and what to reject. And, as regards Scripture, when certain passages were capable of various meanings what, out of all, was the true and right interpretation. For Scripture is only Scripture in the right sense of Scripture. An ordinary mortal's personal idea, or notion of Scripture, unless it be taken in faith from the Church, must be infallibly false. For the Church of God, which, from age to age, has always and ever preserved Scripture can alone divinely and certainly declare what Scripture means.

And so History tells us was the case. All this was seen during the age of heresies concerning the Persons of the Blessed Trinity. Now three of the deadliest and most damnable errors that ever arose to disparage the Ruler of the Universe and to overthrow and nullify the Passion and Death of our Blessed Saviour, His Son, were [*a*] the Arian, [*b*] the Nestorian, and [*c*] the Eutychian heresies.

[*a*] The Arians in the beginning of the fourth century denied the Divinity of our Lord by maintaining that, though the first and chiefest of all creatures, He was but a creature, not of the same substance, or consubstantial, with the Father, and, by consequence, not very God. No matter how highly exalted He might have been, in the estimation of these heretics, when His Divinity was plainly denied, they lowered Him infinitely below God, though they were ready to exalt Him above creatures. Hence it came to pass that the Church assembled in Council at Nicæa, in the year 325, and most explicitly set forth the Catholic Faith. It is contained in the Creed now used during the Christian sacrifice:—I believe "in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds; God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father." These same truths are luminously stated with still greater precision in the Creed of St. Athanasius, who was the great champion of this mystery. So we see that it was the Word of

the Father, very God, and not a creature, Who was made flesh, "suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead."

[*b*] A century later in the Church's history, and another equally deadly heresy arose and devastated the vineyard. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, openly denied the humanity, maintaining that a personal union of the Divinity with the humanity was degrading to the former. He and his followers, therefore, taught that it was false to maintain that God had been born of a Virgin, suffered and died. It was in truth a favourite utterance of this heretic that he "could not believe in a God two or three months old." It followed, consequently, that the Word was one Person and the Flesh another; and thus the clear definite categorical statement of St. John, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us," was repudiated and rejected. The Church's answer to these errors was authoritatively given by the great Council of Ephesus, held A.D. 431. There the unity of the person of Christ was maintained, the title of Mother of God (Θεοτοκος) given to Mary, and those were formally condemned who denied that our Blessed Saviour was true man as well as true God.

[*c*] A few years afterwards another and opposite error arose. Nestorius having divided the "person," Eutyches, abbot of a monastery near Constantinople, refused to divide the two "natures" of Christ, namely, His nature as God, and His nature as man. He maintained that by virtue of the Incarnation these two distinct natures became confused into one; that the human was absorbed by the divine and ceased to exist as distinct. Such a doctrine was plainly erroneous, because it destroyed the truth that our Blessed Saviour is "Perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." As before, so then, another Council was summoned, that of Chalcedon held in 451, and this new error was clearly set forth for the avoidance and rejection of the faithful, and Eutyches was authoritatively condemned.

These too are all condemned in the Creed of St. Athanasius, which amongst ourselves is now being attacked, and which, under the guidance of the Holy Ghost, was evidently drawn up to define and defend the great truths underlying that remarkable sentence in St. John's Gospel "The Word was made Flesh," (*Verbum caro factum est.*)

Thus, as occasion demanded action, the One undivided infallible Church acted for the honour and glory of God, and for the salvation of souls. Closely and firmly did she cling to that Divine deposit of Truth bestowed at Pentecost, and developed and defended in later ages. In the Creed of St. Athanasius, which, if not the work of that holy Father and

Doctor himself, at all events enshrines the doctrines he so valiantly defended, we have the truths contained in Scripture set forth in ideas that are luminous with Divine wisdom, and in language which is at once precise, definite, clear and unmistakable. This Creed, accepted on all hands, treasured by East as well as West, is such that every Church which holds and teaches it, is seen, by that very fact, to be a portion of the one family of the Crucified. "Whosoever will be saved before all things, it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith." The glorious doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation there enshrined, concern us all. Unless the mystery of "God manifest in the flesh" were exactly what the Church has always held and ever taught, the Incarnation would be no reality to God and of no advantage to us. Without the Church's precise and definite teaching neither God's glory would have been set forth, nor our redemption obtained. Unless Christ our Lord was verily and truly God, as Arius denied; unless the same Person who was God was also truly man, as Nestorius denied; and unless both natures existed distinctly as the Eutychians denied, God could not receive that infinite tribute of external glory—for the glory could not be external unless it were distinct from the operations of the Blessed Trinity, and the offerer at the same time a creature, So that the glory of God, the first object of the Incarnation, needs that the same Person who made atonement should be both God and man, and that the two natures should be truly and really distinct. In like manner the same condition is required for our redemption that a due, fitting, and sufficient atonement be made to God for the sin of man. Justice demands that the Person atoning should be of the same nature as the offender, therefore He must be man; it also requires that the atonement should be of infinite value, "full, perfect and sufficient," therefore He must be God.

And as regards the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, where can be found a more complete and perfect setting-forth of that adorable mystery than in the Athanasian Creed? Should the precise terminology of this magnificent exposition of the Catholic Faith be set aside or ignored, how could fallible men hope, by their own investigations, or powers of expression, to proclaim and teach this glorious and cardinal doctrine? They would bungle, and falter, and stumble, and maunder and fail. With this Divine guide, however, following its most lucid teaching, and closely observing its precise phrases, forms, and sentences, they need never err. There is enshrined the great dogma of three Persons in one God. Unity belongs to the essence—distinction to the persons. Above reason the doctrine may be, but not contrary to it. Nor is there any contradiction whatsoever in the respective doctrinal statements themselves, where Unity is affirmed of one reality in God and Trinity of another. The essence of God is one, the substance of God is one, and the nature of God is one. But the Persons in the Godhead are three.

Ever since the day of Pentecost, have come down to us these and other blessed truths of the Gospel of the Most High. On all sides, and by all in Christendom, they have been accepted and taught. Martyrs have held them firmly, and died in their defence; saints, who now walk in white raiment, preached them as God's revelation to man. Confessors have acknowledged them; missionaries declared them. They were brought hither by the monk Augustine, England's blessed apostle, and our first Archbishop of Canterbury. Men of that period received them with rejoicing and gratitude; and succeeding ages have been blessed by their acceptance. When we are asked, therefore, to allow these two great doctrines—the doctrines of the Holy Trinity and the Incarnation—to become open questions, for this is what the opponents of the Athanasian Creed evidently desire by their unsanctified clamour, we reply with no faltering utterance—"How can we do this great wickedness and sin against God?" Warnings of moment are around us, and they are dark and ominous. The Bishop of a Colonial See, now formally deposed by his superiors, and possessing no see nor jurisdiction, can hardly be said to hold the doctrines of the Church of England in their integrity; while the Vicar of a parish in the Northern Province of our National Church, having been most righteously deprived for false doctrine, now openly denies both the doctrines of the Trinity and of the Incarnation, and has become the self-constituted apostle of a mere unadorned Theism. As in former ages, so now, there are thousands who deny the faith, because they dislike any circumscribing of their own liberty of thought and action; forgetting the very fact that God having bestowed a special revelation to fallen man, man's intellectual speculations are of necessity curtailed. True we have not now to face the coarse scurrility, and cold-blooded blasphemy of former times; but it may be well doubted if the present attacks on the Faith are not even more dangerous and subtle than those of old. All this, of course, is what we are led to expect from the warning words of our Blessed Saviour, taken for the text. I know that the various watchmen on the walls of Sion have thought every recurring and varying difficulty of their own age, the darkest, the most perplexing, and the most dangerous. Men are apt to magnify the perplexities personally experienced, feeling necessarily the weight and weariness of existing trials and carking cares. But surely as the ages creep on, as the daring of Unbelief becomes bolder; as the extravagant speculations of so-called "scientific guides" grow wilder and more rash, we may well remember and ponder over the first of our two selected texts ;—" When the Son of Man cometh shall He find [the] faith upon the earth ?"

II. As regards our own duty, the second text under consideration is a most solemn and sacred incitive to action : " Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." This Creed of St. Athanasius, as we know, has been accepted by the whole Church, in all probability for fourteen centuries. For many generations, in the West generally, as in our own National Church in particular, it was solemnly recited in the office for Prime, Sunday by Sunday. When the several changes of the Reformation were effected, notwithstanding the rude rashness of some, no hand of Church robber, no heart of Erastian partizan, was bold enough either to abolish or mutilate a Creed accepted and taught of the whole Universal Church. It still remained to us for use and recitation, on an average, once a month. Who actually penned its sacred lines we know not for certain ; but this we know that it enshrines and defends that unchangeable Catholic Faith, which the glorious saint, whose name it bears, successfully defended, and which had been entrusted at Pentecost to the infant Church to propagate and hand on for future generations. And its actual authorship is a question of comparatively small moment.

The main objections to it are even of smaller. One sees at a glance that they are either groundless, frivolous, false, unreal or factitious. Some of its opponents, pretending to have a superfine zeal for Orthodoxy, or a peculiar and passionate sympathy for the Oriental Church, maintain, that though the Easterns accept it, they are deliberately consigned by it to everlasting condemnation. Such rhetorical rhodomontade carries with it its own complete refutation. Again, that it is not in parts a correct translation is the feeble complaint of feeble minds. Some have consequently taken upon themselves to tamper with, and tinker the pure English and majestic rhythm of our venerable translation. And with what results ? A display of more than questionable scholarship and an acceptance in place of the old and reputable form, of debased phraseology, and modern jargon. Furthermore, if the Latin version as contained in the Salisbury and Roman Breviaries be not the true text—agreeing as it does almost literally, and to an iota, with the text of the Oriental Service-books—where, let me me ask, is the true text likely to be found ? And if the original text, in these last ages, is to be required by some critics before they accept the Creed of St. Athanasius, how will it fare with the Creed of the Apostles and of Constantinople, or the four Gospels, if the same necessity be applied to them ? Still further, as regards the assertion that the statements of the Athanasian Creed are too deep and metaphysical for the faithful in general to comprehend and accept. We, who accept the Creed in its plain and literal sense without reservation or casuistry, plainly deny the fact. Assuming the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation to be true, we *know* that it would be simply impossible for any human being to frame sentences in which those great truths could be more clearly or luminously set forth than they have been in that Creed, because, as we believe, those who did frame them, were truly and divinely guided by the Spirit of God, dwelling in the Church, as a soul dwells in a body, and the whole family of Christ was equally guided by the same Spirit in a general and universal acceptance of that Creed.

As to "explanations" or "notes" to be added to it, why should a portion of the Church of England, independent of and apart from other national or local churches in communion with her, undertake to add such? Who wants them? Who has asked for them? What purpose would they answer? Whom would they satisfy? Of course it is open to any authorized teacher of the faithful to explain this Creed and to point out the value and force of its blessed truths, and beneficent, and much-needed warnings. But a note or explanation is no more needed for the Creed than for the Gospels, which contain exactly the same kind of dogmatic statements and threatenings, and which come down to us, both as to their text and meaning, on precisely and exactly the same authority, namely, the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ.

But all these objections are evidently unreal and only trumped up to serve a purpose and settled intention—that of ridding our old communion of her dogmatic character, of degrading her to the level of a sect, and of combining together in a Christ-less and Creed-less establishment the various heretical bodies and modern communities, than which nothing more obviously represent to thoughtful moderns the old city of Babel. It is not the Athanasian Creed, of itself, that is so virulently and passionately attacked; it is the doctrines of the Trinity and the true Godhead of the Son of Mary.

Men in high places amongst us, as we know too surely by their own immoral confession, have unhappily lost faith in the formularies they once subscribed, and apparently believe no longer in those Divine truths, by honestly and frankly accepting which they were once thought to be qualified for the official positions they still occupy. Judged by their own reiterated utterances they now feel the acceptance of that a burden, a tax, and a grievance which, we find to be our greatest earthly delight and consolation, God's revelation to man by Christ Jesus, or, in other words—"the Catholic Faith."

Others,—having consorted in the act with a Bishop of the

Southern Province and the Presiding Member of the Canterbury Convocation, amongst several more,—deliberately admitted a Socinian preacher to the Holy Sacrament, and held out the right hand of fellowship to a denier of the Lord who bought them, can hardly be expected to defend the Creed of St. Athanasius which condemns with a blessed severity, and a precision which none can fail to comprehend, those who reject the Truth as it in Jesus.

O beloved, let us take warning by that which has occurred in the past. To Sardis, and Thyatira, and Philadelphia, churches founded by an Apostle, came the warning voice of Him, the Eternal Son who died, and rose again, and liveth for evermore. His words were uttered by due delegation but were all unheeded. No response was heard. No contrition was undertaken; no pardon secured. A few years came and went, sunshine and shadow, spring and autumn, day and night, season after season, and then, seen to be parched up, and barren, and arid, the anger of God like a dark cloud overspread those faithless churches; for grace had been cast out or trampled under foot, God had been dishonoured and the spiritual life was dead.

Cling, dear brethren in Christ, therefore, to the faith of your forefathers. Sacrifice never the Truth of God. "Hold fast that which thou hast." Do everything that is in your power to preserve this most sacred deposit of old. Always be on the watch. Act when action is meritorious; be patient when Authority declares that patience must be put into practice. Be instant in prayer; be recollected; be firm. And be not dismayed because evil men seem on the point of triumphing. Above all live the life of true Christians, as the best mode of defending that, in which lies all your hopes for eternal happiness. Intercede with Almighty God on behalf of this Church and Nation. Ask that His undeserved mercies, recently made manifest in a most marked manner, may still be showered down and become evident once more; and that England, as of old, may be once again an island of saints. From the battlements of Sion they watch the sharp conflict now going on below, who once were in the thick of the fight, it may be failing and faltering like ourselves, in moments of weakness, but who now walk in white raiment and wear the crown; for they were found faithful and triumphed. For us they lift up holy hands—for the Church of God "militant here on earth" they ever intercede; for the church of Alban and Edward and the martyr Thomas, and Anselm, and Boniface, and Laud. If we, therefore, are true and faithful, obedient, patient and bold, *but only so*, then may we look for the blessed fulfilment of Christ's most consoling exhortation; "Hold fast that which thou hast that no man take thy crown."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. W. W. LANE, D.D., F.R.G.S., F.R.S.L.,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

CHAWTON, ALTON, HANTS.

"*The Common Salvation.*"—Jude 3.

Some things are reckoned common, because in the world's exchange they are bought and sold for little money; others, because they are plentiful; others again, because they are of a bad or mean quality; and yet again others, because all classes of society enjoy them, such as water, air, bread, salt, &c. St. Jude, however, makes a "common" matter the basis of his epistle, and deals with it as a profound, and yet withal a sublime subject.

I. *Negatively.—Salvation* is not "common," when viewed in relation to its *value.* When the great diamond was brought to this country, and received as a name, the "Koh-i-noor," it was estimated to be worth the enormous sum of five hundred thousand pounds; but when placed beside the pearl of great price, it seemed of little value; the fine gold became dim and lost its lustre in the dazzling brilliance of "Salvation," just as the glow-worm's light is eclipsed by the refulgent rays of the sun in noon-day. The sun of the Bible is Salvation—by it, every page is enlightened and made beautiful.

> "Salvation, oh the joyful sound,
> What pleasure to our ear;"

It is the "wedding garment," and the Christian's solace; it is the restorer of broken humanity, the passport to future bliss, and a song of happiness, for time and eternity—Salvation! Salvation! What has it cost? It could not be purchased with mountains of gold, mines of silver, nor piles of precious stones.

Land, houses, cattle, rivers of oil, seas of blood could not purchase Salvation. Man could not buy it—he is too poor—Angels could not buy it, for although they are rich in strength and activity, rich in knowledge and purity, rich in possessions and power, yet they are too poor to buy "the Common Salvation." The Archangel Gabriel, who stands in the presence of the great Eternal, would gladly have purchased so great a blessing for us had he been able; the King of Saints would have implored him on our account, could he have satisfied the demands of justice! Climb ye now on Pisgah's top, and through the telescope of the Bible, look beyond the boundary of earth, to "the holiest of all." What heavenly lights burst upon our sight, what glorious things we behold! but look, there is One, whose face is more glorious than the rest, whose voice is more melodious, whose crown is more brilliant, and whose seat is "the great white throne." He is the Son of God, "begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of Gods, Light of light, Very God of Very God," the Creator of the universe, the Light of heaven, the Joy of angels, the great Centre of attraction in the Heavenly Temple, and the only One who is sufficiently *rich* to procure for us this great boon, and He who was so "rich, for our sakes became poor" to purchase a "Common Salvation." He was born in Bethlehem—what amazing condescension! He fought with the devil in the Wilderness—what conquering power! He was a man of sorrow and grief, He was poor and despised, He was persecuted, hunted down, and forsaken. In the garden of Gethsemane His *mental pain* was so great and long, that He memoralized it with great drops of blood. At Calvary His *physical pain* was so severe, that He could not restrain His groaning, but His soul's agony was greater far, so great indeed that an angel's tongue must fail to describe it, how weak therefore must be the description by a man's. He poured out his heart's best blood as the price of "the Common Salvation;" what a price! the precious blood of Christ, the Lamb without blemish or spot. Contemplate His rank, the purity of His nature, the holiness of His life, the beauty of His character, and then try if you can estimate aright the value of His Salvation! We can only repeat with holy Peter—"The precious blood of Christ!" If we estimate Salvation then by its *cost*, and view it in relation to its *value*, then it is *not* "Common."

Again, if we view Salvation in relation to its *quality*, it is *not*

"*Common.*" See there, a beggar clothed in rags, whose teeth chatter by reason of the cold, his limbs are well nigh frozen, his eyes almost blinded by the drifting snow, he finds his way to the door of some liberal Samaritan, and begs for some garment to keep him warm. He tells his plaintive tale. The heart of a "gentleman" beats with sympathy and tenderness. The servant is told to find some "cast-off garments," and they are given to the man of suffering and misfortune. Kind man, to clothe the poor, but Christ is kinder far; for when a poor sinner comes to Him, though clothed in rags and covered with filth, He accepts him cheerfully, cleanses him in the "fountain opened in the house of David for sin and for uncleanness." He clothes him, not in "cast-off garments," but in a robe of finest quality and texture, namely: the robe of "*Salvation.*" Examine well this precious robe, it is more perfect than the seamless coat which Christ Himself wore, and more beautiful than Joseph's, though made-up of many colours. The Saviour called it "the wedding garment." The father of the Prodigal called it "the best robe." Isaiah spoke of it as "a beautiful garment." The man who wears this vesture of Salvation will shine brightly in this world, and at death be admitted to "the marriage supper of the Lamb, to associate with the angels for ever and ever." The writers of the Bible not unfrequently speak of Salvation as compared to a feast. When people of position and wealth invite guests to a banquet, the richest and best things are provided for their entertainment, and the Prince of Heaven has prepared a feast of the richest character.

"The King of Heaven his table spreads,
And dainties crown the board;
Not Paradise with all its joys
Could such delight afford."

A Prophet declared it "a feast of fat things." Jesus said, "I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatlings are killed." The "bread of life" has been prepared, the "wine" secured, the "water of life" provided, and the "milk" obtained; and now the Redeemer of men bids every one of us to come to the feast. It is a sumptuous feast! a strengthening feast! a cheering feast! an ennobling feast! a spiritualizing feast! Shall we judge of its *quality* by the blessings it secures? If so, it secures to us pardon and peace, Divine guidance and protection, a happy life, a peaceful death, and an entrance into heaven, a throne and a palm, a harp and companionship with angels, and far above all, an eternal union with the Lord Jesus Christ. Viewed then, in relation to its *quality*, Salvation cannot be "*Common.*" But let us now look at the matter.

II. *Positively.*—Why does the sainted *Jude* call it a *Common* Salvation? Because it is provided *for all*, and offered *to all*. We speak of our highways as "Common," because they are free for travel for peasant as well as Queen. There are some passages in the Bible which seem to limit the extent of Salvation. Some people take these passages to enforce the doctrine of "unconditional election," or what is called Calvinism;" but if we carefully weigh those passages, we shall find them harmonize with every other plain statement written for the comfort of God's creature—man. "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way: and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us *all*." "He (Christ) by the grace of God shall taste death for *every man*." By carefully reading the promises, threatenings, invitations, and warnings of the Book of God, we must conclude that they teach the doctrine of a Salvation free for all, whatever their colour or clime, their education or wealth, their ignorance or poverty, their age or rank, their profession or employment. If the doctrines of unconditional election and reprobation be correct, how can the sinner be judged and punished for rejecting that which was never provided for him? Looked at from a human stand-point, these hyper-doctrines seem to change that Being whom we know to be so benevolent, into a most malevolent monster. When a sinner is converted, the Holy Ghost plants in him the germ of love. This little germ produces a result, it makes the young Christian sigh, or groan, and pray, and ardently desire the Salvation of *all* men. If it were possible he would embrace all mankind and impart to them "the Common Salvation." If, then, a tiny spark of love will produce such delightful effects, how willing and anxious must the Divine Being be to save all men, for He is the fountain of all goodness and mercy, His great name is *Love*, "God is Love." "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die, O! house of Israel." The ministry of our Lord and Master, together with His groans, tears, bloody sweat, death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, all proclaim this willingness and desire to receive pardon, and save the human race. Salvation is freely offered to *all* men, "without money and without price." Do not use your free agency to your own destruction; do not dash the cup of Salvation from your lips; do not close the eye of faith when Christ is uplifted; do not run away to some city of refuge, when the gates are wide open; do not reject "the Common Salvation," and thereby join with the Jews of old, in saying "away with Him, crucify Him, crucify Him." If man be a free agent, how great is his responsibility to God; how terrible will be his position at the judgment day; how awful his doom for eternity, if he rejects "the Common Salvation," which is provided *for* and offered to *all* men.

Salvation is "*Common*," because it is enjoyed by all believers. Water, bread, and air, are called common, because they are enjoyed by all classes of the community; and so "*Salvation*" is enjoyed by all true believers, whatever their language, colour, or degree. In the living temple, all are "lively stones," in the true fold, all the sheep enjoy the "green pastures and still waters;" in the Church of Christ, "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." The weakest believer who hangs upon Christ, although he may be fitly compared to a "bruised reed," and his faith be only like a grain of mustard seed, yet Christ acknowledges him to be a lamb in His fold, a babe in His family, a subject in His Kingdom, and a jewel in His crown. Whilst the weak Christian enjoys salvation, he should not be willing to remain in spiritual infancy and weakness, but earnestly desire to "grow in grace"—to attain moral manhood—to partake of "the strong meat" of the Gospel—and to enjoy the higher and richer joys of religion, which the sanctified man is warranted to expect and enjoy, although in a world of trials, sorrows and sin. We should endeavour to tread the "higher walks" of Christian life in order to vanquish our foes—to exhibit the moral likeness of Christ—to recommend the religion of the Bible—to honour the name of our Master by winning souls to Him—and to be workmen in His vineyard, and soldiers in His army, who will at last receive the Divine commendation. "Well done, good and faithful servant." Weak believer, we congratulate you because of the inestimable blessing you have obtained, but would again urge you to "press toward the mark, "Gospel Perfection, that your usefulness in saving souls may be increased, and thereby Christ's name greatly honoured. The babe is as much a subject as the strong man, but he is not so useful in the nation's commerce, nor so able to defend his country against the invading army: so in the Church of Christ, the babe is not so useful as he who has attained spiritual manhood. The tiny, stunted tree in the garden, is as much a tree as the lofty, luxuriant, and fruitful one by its side, but it is not so useful: so in the Church, the tiny stunted Christian, is not so productive as the one who, like a flourishing "palm tree," brings forth a hundred, yea, a thousand-fold.

Brethren, let us seek to be "strong in the strength which God supplies through His beloved Son." As all Christians enjoy "the Common Salvation," what a bond of union it becomes, for it makes us all "one in Christ." Possessing "the Common Salvation," we possess the same Father, the same Saviour, the same Comforter; we walk in the same highway, we are fired with the same love, animated by the same hope, cheered by the same prospects, fed by the same hand, we fight the same foes, we sail in the same ship, and we walk together to the same home our "Father's House" above.

"Home, sweet Home!"

It is there, where our union with our brethren will be strengthened—where our union with the angels will be confirmed, and where our union with Christ will be closer, stronger, and eternally secure. There we shall sit around a common table, together eat of "the tree of life," drink of the crystal stream, partake of the "new wine," and be "for ever with the Lord," enjoying "the Common Salvation."

My brother, have you found this great pearl? If not seek it to day by repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. "Look unto me, and be ye saved." "Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward: how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" The vilest offender may turn and find grace. Christ can save a sinner as vile as Manasseh. He can save a thief upon the cross, and a persecuting Saul; and so direct the energies of the mind as to secure the mightiest results for good upon succeeding ages. Christ was born of the Jews, but His salvation was not designed for any nation in particular, nor for the age in which He lived. Those who lived before the birth of Christ were saved by faith in the promise of His coming, and all who have lived since by faith in sacrifice which has been offered. "Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; nor yet that He should offer himself often, as the high priest entered into the holy place every year with the blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself."

Man! lost man; with a never dying death staring him in the face, actually neglects this "Common Salvation." Strange infatuation! Madly rushing on to ruin, whilst Christ shows his bleeding hands, and feet and side, entreating us to be reconciled. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a Salvation?" There is no escape. Neglect your business, and failure will follow; neglect the education of your children, and they will grow up in ignorance and perhaps crime; neglect this "Common Salvation," and your soul will be ruined for ever!

Salvation! let the echo fly,
The spacious earth around;
While all the armies of the sky
Conspire to raise the sound.

Glory, honour, praise and power,
Be unto the Lamb for ever,
Jesus Christ is our Redeemer,
Hallelujah! Amen!

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

[No. 31.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

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University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

On Sunday Afternoon, April 21, 1872,

BEFORE HER MAJESTY'S JUDGES

AND

THE CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF LONDON.

"*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.*"—1 Peter ii, 16.

St. Peter touches a note which appeals to human interests in all ages and everywhere. Freedom is one of those words which need no recommendation. It belongs to the same category as light, order, progress, truth, law. It is one of the ideas which, in some sense or other, mankind accepts as an axiom—as a landmark or principle of healthful life beyond discussion. What do we mean by freedom? We mean the power of a living being to act without hindrance according to the true law of its life. A mineral, therefore, is in no sense capable of freedom. It neither grows nor moves—it does not live. A tree, in a metaphorical or attenuated sense, is capable of freedom. It contains within itself the mystery of a vital principle which requires certain conditions for its necessary development; and in this sense we may speak of a tree having freedom to grow. The lower animals in various degrees are capable of something which may, with better reason, be called freedom. They are capable of it in degrees which vary proportionately to their approach to the frontier of self-conscious, self-determining life as manifested in human beings. The brute does not merely grow, he moves from place to place. He does not move by any fatal necessity but can take this direction or that as instinct prompts him, without interfering with his movement, so as to trammel his freedom. Still, it is instinct he obeys. He does not reflect about his movement. He does not choose, while comprehending his power of choice. He is really from moment to moment governed by that which is for the time being the strongest instinct or passion that is upon him. If he is free to run about, free to eat what he likes, to sleep and rest when he likes, he has all that he wants, and his instinct will probably guide him to sleep, eat and take exercise in such proportions and at such times as the law of his life requires. With man, it is otherwise; for he is a moral being. He reflects, and knows what he is doing when he reflects. He chooses, and knows what he is doing in this exercise of choice. Much of man's life is vegetative, no doubt, like that of the tree. Much of it is sentient, and under the government of instinct, as that of the animal. We go through thousands of movements and acts every day of our lives, as we say "without thinking about them." We obey instinct, or habit, or some governing inclination, without throwing any conscious deliberate energy into the act of obedience. But our true life as human beings is something higher than this. Man lives and acts as man. He asserts that which is properly his human liberty when he obeys a law which he is free to disobey. For he is a moral being, and in this his greatness consists. It is not uncommon now-a-days to hear the insignificance of man insisted on as compared with the planets, with the suns and stars that roll over our heads. Certainly, my brethren, if the greatness of created beings is to be determined by their material bulk, man *is* insignificant enough. He is, in this particular very much below many other animals around him on this his own planet. But man can do that which no planet can do—he can obey or refuse to obey the highest law of his life. The planet cannot leave its appointed orbit. It circles on, age after age, in obedience to the mathematical law which governs it. God has given it a law which shall not be broken. Man can disobey the highest law of his life; and this liberty is at once his prerogative and his danger. The highest law of man's life, is to know, love and serve the Being who gave it to him—the Being whose very existence has not dawned upon the most intelligent of any of the creatures below man. God wills that man should obey Him freely—that is, that he should be able to refuse obedience, and yet should obey. And this, which is man's consummate prerogative, is necessarily linked to a fearful responsibility for declining to exercise it. If man obeyed God only as a planet revolves in its orbit—only as a brute eats his food—he would not be man.

Man's freedom is exercised in three main departments of his life—in his life as a social being, which we term his political life; in his life as a thinking being, or his intellectual life; and in his life as a moral being—his personal spiritual life. In each of these departments of human activity, Christ our Great Deliverer has made man free.

Christ our Lord has given to man, first of all, political or social freedom. He has not, indeed, drawn out a scheme of government, and stamped it with His Divine authority as guaranteeing freedom. We Englishmen rightly prize a constitutional Monarchy as the best form of government; especially when it is recommended by the character of such a Sovereign as our present Queen. But while we cannot even entertain the thought of abandoning our own Constitution for any other, we must frankly admit that a citizen of the United States, for instance, may feel himself as much at home amid the political doctrines of the New Testament as any subject of her Majesty. For the New Testament asserts nothing but two necessary elements of man's life as a political or social being. The first is the existence of some government which it is his conscientious duty to obey; whether it be an Assembly, a President, a King, or an Emperor—some "higher power" to which every soul is to be subject, because there is no power but of God, and the "powers that be" are ordained of God. Secondly, it asserts the fact of the freedom—the inalienable, indestructible freedom of the individual Christian under any form of Government.

There had been something like freedom in the ancient heathen world for particular classes, particular races, for the masters of conquered provinces, and the owners of thousands of slaves. The ruling races or classes acted much as they liked. They jealously noted any attempt on the part of any aspiring tyrant to destroy liberty. This was an external, rather than an internal, a political rather than a moral liberty. The liberty of the few it was, and yet the enslavement of the many. As it had no moral and internal basis it was the accident, rather than the spirit, of the ancient world; and as political constitutions wore out it died away, by an invariable law, into a tyranny. When our Lord came on earth, all that could be called civilization was under the sway of the Roman Cæsar. Yet with Him also there came the germs of political liberty; for when the individual man had learned to feel the greatness and the interest of life—the real horizon which stretches before the eye of the soul, as it looks into eternity beyond the grave—the depths of being within each soul, its inexhaustible capacity for pleasure and for suffering, the reality and nearness of the great God—and of His Divine Son—of our unseen fellow-citizens, the blessed angels—the awful distinction of being ransomed by the blood of the Most Holy and sanctified by the Eternal Spirit, it was impossible not to feel also that in the highest sense each man had rights to assert, and a bearing to maintain. And thus from the first the Christian was a free man simply because he was a Christian. The political or social accidents of his position could not touch that unimpeded movement of his highest life in which true freedom consists.

It has indeed been alleged—it will have occurred to you—that as a matter of fact our Lord left the great despotism of the ancient world untouched. Christ taught; He was crucified; He was buried; He rose; He ascended; but the Cæsar Tiberius still sat on the throne of the world. There never was a more odious system of personal government than that of the Roman Emperors. The surviving forms of the extinct Republic only serving to make the actual tyranny harder to bear. Yet, even under such an Emperor as Nero St. Paul wrote—"Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers;" and St. Peter —"Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or unto governors;" meaning the consuls and pro-consuls established under the Roman rule in Judea; "as unto them that are sent for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well." In the same way, the Apostles advised Christian slaves to give obedience to their masters, as if to the Lord Christ Himself—to obey, not with eye-service, as if they had only to do just so much as might be insisted upon by a jealous taskmaster, but with singleness of heart, as throwing every energy into a conscientious work.

It may be asked, How are such precepts compatible with the assertion that Christ gave man political freedom? The answer is that He gave us a moral force which did two things: First, as I have noted, it made every Christian, in virtue of the law of his life, independent of outward political circumstances; and next, it made the creation of new civil institutions only a question of time. The slave, who could not whisper to his fellow-slave except when he was at rest—the slave who could not control a single movement of his person throughout the long, weary day —the slave whose every gesture was regulated by an implacable etiquette—the slave whose life was, at least during particular periods of Roman history, literally at the disposal of his owner— he, too, if a Christian, was inwardly free. He had a sense of freedom, a power of living according to the highest law of his being, which the Cæsar on his throne dreamt not of. That was enough for him, at least for the present, if he knew the conditions of his own happiness, and if he had divined the will of his Lord. By-and-by the moral seed which had been sown would bear fruit, in the emancipation of such as himself; it would bear fruit in new public institutions; and it would change the face of the world. It was not, indeed, our Lord's part, like that of some agitators of the time, to promote a rising among the slaves, to arouse provinces into rebellion against their rulers, to issue programmes for a political or social revolution. That would have been at issue with the lessons of love, tenderness, charity, longsuffering, which He came to teach. But His one doctrine of the worth and dignity of redeemed man was like leaven deposited in the corrupt mass of human society, and in time the world could not but be leavened politically, as in other ways. The process has been advancing for centuries; and it is still going on. We Englishmen owe much to it, more, perhaps, than any nation in the world.

It has been said, I know, that if despotism ceased in this country with the Stuarts, liberty is still confronted by the Statute Book. Of course it is. How in the world could it be otherwise? The objection assumes that between Law and Liberty there is some sort of necessary antagonism. We know, unhappily, that in some foreign countries this opposition is taken for granted; that there are countries near our own in which Law and Liberty are treated as implacable enemies, in which order is secured only by the confiscation of all personal liberty, in which Liberty raises its head only amidst the ruins of Order and of Law. We may well thank God, that He has spared us such trials. When your lordships come down to this Temple of Jesus Christ, you represent two principles, and not merely one: you represent the sacred interests of Liberty, not less than the sacred interests of Law. For, Law is the guarantee of Liberty—not its enemy; and Liberty, if it knows its own interests, is ever the enthusiastic friend of Law. Each of them rests upon an ultimate fact which is Divine: Liberty, upon the fact of the greatness, the majesty of individual human life; Law, upon the fact of our divinely implanted social instincts, and, as a consequence, on the Divine origin of society and the inevitable necessity of upholding and protecting society against individual selfish passion. To crush this Liberty in the name of Law is to sow the seed sooner or later of social insurrection. To depreciate or insult Law in the name of Liberty is to make of Liberty a cloke of maliciousness, and to ensure its ruin. Nothing can be more deplorable than a conflict betwen these sacred principles. An old Psalmist, reviewing the tyrannical administration of law by the Judges of Israel, says, "all the foundations of the earth were out of course." The whole social fabric literally totters to its base when there is a struggle between human law and the Divine law of conscience; between law and the highest liberty. To avoid this must be the end of every wise legislator, to deprecate it, the heartfelt prayer of every good citizen.

Christ our Lord has given man also intellectual freedom. He has enfranchised man by the gift of truth—truth in its fulness—truth not merely relative and provisional, but absolute and final. As He said Himself, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Until He came, the human intellect was, in different degrees enslaved. It was enslaved either to some degrading superstition, or to some false and one-sided philosophy. Man must think about himself—about his place in the universe, about his destiny, about his relation to a Higher Being, and if he has no reliable truth at hand he makes the best he can of attainable error. He may "change the glory of the Incorruptible God into an image, made like unto corruptible man:" still *that* he feels is better than nothing. He may listen to a teacher who, while promising him liberty, is himself the servant of corruption: still that is more endurable than utter silence. Man's interest in the great problems which haunt him betrays him to his intellectual foes; unless he have embraced the truth—unless the truth in all its greatness and tenderness has made him free.

It is undeniable, as a matter of fact, that the religion of Christ gave a great impulse to human thought. It made men think as they had never thought before. It made men feel what it is to have within this puny body a spirit which can take the measure of the spheres. When Christ, in all the glory of His Godhead and His Manhood had enthroned Himself in the soul, He taught man by His very presence to think worthily of the greatness of God, and—despite his weakness and corruption—of the greatness of man. He freed man from the narrowing cramping influence of local philosophers and teachers of petty schemes and theories, in the interest of classes and races. He led men out into the great highways of thought, where, if they would, they might know the universal Father, manifested in His Blessed Son,—as the Author of all Existence, as its one legitimate End.

You ask me whether, as a matter of fact, Christianity does not cramp intellectual liberty, by insisting upon the necessity of believing Christian doctrine—whether the creeds for instance, are not hostile to, as being limitations of, mental liberty. Certainly, my brethren, our Lord has given us a body of truth which we can, if we like, reject—which it is our happiness to believe. What He has done for man in this way is embodied in His own recorded teaching, in the writings of the Apostles, and finally in the creeds of the universal Church. These documents are to true intellectual liberty, just what law is to social liberty. They protect: they do not cramp it. They afford a fixed point from which thought may take wing. They do not enchain thought. If man would think steadily and fruitfully, he must begin with fixed ascertained truth. You cannot survey the surface of the ocean while you yourself are tossing upon its waves. You must plant your foot upon a rock in order to do so, from a basis which is fixed, while all around you is perpetually shifting; and to plunge voluntarily off the rock into the waves is deliberately to surrender this vantage ground. It is with creeds as with law. If you repudiate law you may become the slaves of every individual will. If you repudiate the creeds of Christianity you may become the slaves of any petty intellectual dogmatizer. In repudiating the creeds you leave the broad public highways of the Christian faith, you leave the many-sided and comprehensive thought of the universal Church for the cramped and morbid speculations of individual thinkers; you abandon yourself to all the petty tyrannies, to all the insolent usurpations of private thought, to all the formulas of individual human masters, from which Christ our Lord has set you free. If it would be a mistake to tear up Magna Charta in the supposed interests of Freedom, because Magna Charta certainly recognizes the obligations of Law, it is also a mistake to mutilate or disuse a great creed of the Universal Church—such for instance, as the Athanasian Creed—under the idea of securing mental liberty. The creed does but state that which every well-informed and faithful Christian wishes—must wish—to believe. Christian doctrine, is to man's very highest life of thought, just what law is to his social life. To reject the one in the interests of the other is to turn mental liberty into a cloke of maliciousness.

Lastly, Christ our Lord has made us morally free. He has broken the chains which fettered the human will. He has restored to the will its buoyancy and its power. Man was morally free in Paradise; but he became enslaved in consequence of an act of disobedience which we name the Fall. Man then forfeited the grace which had secured the balance and proportions of his nature in its earlier and purer stage; and he could not transmit to his descendants the gift which he had lost himself. Man's will lost its spring—lost its superiority to circumstances, lost its independence of passion, lost its lofty unlikeness to mere brute instinct. Man fell, more and more fatally under the dominion of surrounding nature—of his own lower nature—under the dominion of his senses enslaved by nature. He became by degrees what St. Paul describes him as being at the beginning of the Epistle to the Romans. He was, in the sternest sense of the term a slave, because the sovereign power within him—his will—had lost the secret of its freedom and was enslaved. How was he to be enfranchised? There came One to him and said—"If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." What was lost to man was to be more than regained by Christ. Not merely was the penalty of the old transgressions to be paid, so that man was to be relieved from captivity, but his will was to be re-invigorated by a heaven-sent force, or Grace, placing it once more in harmony with the law of his highest life. St. Paul speaks of this, when he says that those whom Christ makes free become the servants, or slaves, of righteousness. There is no Oregon territory in the moral world—no tract of unoccupied neutral ground which runs between the frontier of the empire of Christ and the frontier of the empire of evil. They are conterminous to each other; and to be rescued from the one is to be at once a subject of the other.

It is objected here that moral freedom is not worth having, if it be but a service after all. "You talk to us of freedom," men say, "but what you really mean is restrictions—restrictions upon action, upon inclination, upon speech: You mean obligations—obligations to work, to self-discipline, to sacrifice one's self and others to all the details of the code of Christian duty." My brethren, you are right. Certainly we *do* mean that. The Christian does live under a system of restrictions and obligations. These prescribe for him just what his own heaven-sent nature would wish him to be—would wish him to do. No doubt they would be very irritating to the old nature which he has sloughed off—"the old Adam, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." But they are entirely acceptable to, and eagerly demanded by, the new man in him, "which, after God, is created in righteousness, and true holiness." Therefore, whatever the Christian may be outwardly, he is inwardly an emancipated man. In obeying Christ's law he acts just as he likes to act; he acts according to that which he recognizes as the highest law of his life. He obeys Law, true—the law of his God; but then he has no inclination to disobey it. Obedience is not to him a yoke: disobedience would be to him a torture. His inclinations are in accordance with his highest duty, and that which frees him is itself a law. "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus," says St. Paul, "hath made me free from the law of sin and death." The Christian is, as St. Peter tells us to-day, the servant—in the original it is the slave—of God. But then, as he would not, for all that the world can give, be anything else, this service is perfect freedom.

The Antinomian plea that the rules and laws of the Christian life are enfringements upon liberty, is another way of making liberty a cloke of maliciousness. Conscientiousness, regular habits of devotion, accuracy and painstaking in doing good to others and for others, and in the disposal of time, and in what we say in conversation, the avoidance not merely of sin, but of temptation to sin and bad company, are represented as inconsistent with freedom. Inconsistent they are with mere human impetuosity, with mere animal impatience of restraint—with that low notion of liberty which places it in the indulgence of our lower instincts at the cost of our higher ones. True freedom, is the power of acting without hindrance according to the higher law of our being. To do wrong, therefore, does not really assert our liberty; it degrades, it enslaves us. It may have been necessary—it was necessary—that we should have this power of doing wrong, in order to do right freely; but we forfeit our own freedom none the less if we do aught but right. A man is not really free—he is not really more free—because he steals, because he swears, because he commits murder. This false notion of liberty is the worst enemy of true liberty. Our highest liberty, depend upon it, is secured by our free and complete obedience to every detail of the Eternal Law..

Let us look up to our great Emancipator, Who was crucified and is throned in the heavens. After all, our freedom is His gift. But He has left us the power, the perilous power of forfeiting it, in order that we may, if we will retain it for His glory. Let us see that we do not forfeit it, by cloaking under it the maliciousness which repudiates Law. The laws of the land protect our social liberty. The laws of the faith—the laws of natural and revealed truth—protect our mental liberty. The moral laws of God protect our personal spiritual liberty. All true law meets in, and radiates from, the Divine Person of the Everlasting Christ, the Heir of the Father, the Eternal Legislator, our Deliverer from all political, intellectual and moral slavery. If we repudiate Law, we turn His gift of freedom against Himself. If through our willing obedience, we find in Law the countersign of our Freedom, we are—and in this way only can we be—"free indeed."

A Sermon

BY THE

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"*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*"—St. John iii, 14, 15.

We are perhaps more familiar with the dialogue in which these words occur, than with most other parts of the Gospel story. Nicodemus, the learned Doctor of Theology, a Master in Israel, comes to Jesus Christ the carpenter of Nazareth, under the cover of night, in a spirit half-patronizing, half-inquiring, to judge for himself who this strange wonder-worker was. The first words he utters, shew the light in which he regarded Christ. "We know that Thou art a teacher come from God." This might seem a high view to take. At a time when so very few of his countrymen saw anything Divine in Christ at all, it might appear something for this proud Doctor, to acknowledge His heavenly mission. Doubtless it was a high view, but it was very far from being high enough. Christ's reply seemed to have very little to do with what Nicodemus had said—"Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus had spoken of Christ as a Teacher. But neither he nor the Jewish nation generally, looked for a Messiah who should be a *Teacher* merely. The Messiah whom they expected was to be something more, He was to be a *King*. And Christ takes hold of this thought in the breast of Nicodemus, and draws it out to the light. "You come to Me as a mere Teacher. But you are looking for more than that. You are looking for a kingdom of Israel more powerful than that of old, a kingdom of Jehovah on the earth.

That kingdom is now to be established; but unless a man be born again, he cannot see it."

The Jewish Doctor is utterly bewildered. His own dry formal religion has so withered up his spiritual life, that when he is here brought face to face with the living Truth, he is dazzled and blinded. But Christ goes on calmly explaining what this kingdom of God is, what that birth of water and of the Spirit is, which is the only admission into it. And as He passes from the earthly to the heavenly, the dialogue becomes more and more mysterious, till in these fourteenth and fifteenth verses, He speaks for the first time not only of the kingdom but of the King.

In comparing Himself with anything in the past history of the Jews, we might perhaps have expected Him to speak of the old glories of David and Solomon, as symbolical and prophetical of His own. Those names were far the greatest in the long muster-roll of Hebrew kings; the latter particularly was the actual key-stone in the widest arch of Jewish empire. The fact that He did *not* mention these names in connection with His own, shews at least that *His* empire would be something very different from *theirs*. "He goes back to an older and sublimer event in Jewish history. The brazen serpent to which the eyes of those were turned who had been bitten by the serpents in the wilderness, the common life-giving, life-restoring object—this was the sign which He chose of that dominion which should stretch from sea to sea, which should reach to the lowest depths and work the mightiest deliverance." (Maurice on St. John's Gospel, p. 97.)

It may be profitable for us this morning to see what we can learn of that kingdom from the verses before us, to see what we are permitted of the Kingship and Majesty of the Son of Man.

We often find in Sacred History that some event which was at the time of its actual occurrence insignificant, is afterwards raised to great importance, by some great event which it typified. Thus the rock which Moses struck in the wilderness was elevated into a symbol and prophecy of Christ Himself, the Rock of Ages, the fountain of living waters. The passage of the Red Sea, in itself certainly important, has become still more so by its close connection with one of the greatest mysteries of our Church,—

the Sacrament of Baptism. And so it is here. We are all familiar with the account given us in the Twenty-first chapter of Numbers of the origin of the brazen serpent. The serpents coming from beneath the desert sand, and prostrating the hosts of Israel with their inflammatory bite; the symbol of deliverance raised aloft in the centre of the vast encampment; the anxious look of agony turned towards it from every side, often from eyes growing dim with the dimness of death—all this forms a picture which is far from being strange to us. Nicodemus, who was doubtless thoroughly versed in the history of his nation, must often have thought of that strange scene. He must often have been puzzled, as so many have been before and since his day, as to what it could mean, what possible connection there could be between looking at a brazen image, and receiving a cure from a most fatal malady. These words of our Lord must have awakened strange thoughts in him, and when he pondered them long afterwards, when after three years of hope and waiting he came with much precious ointment to anoint the dead body of Him whom he now called Master, he must have learnt more of that lifting up in the wilderness than he had ever known before.

For us the value of the symbol is almost entirely merged in that which it symbolizes. What then *is* symbolized here? What great truth underlies the shadowy outlines of that desert-picture? What are the fiery serpents? What has that brazen serpent reared aloft to do with us?

We should, probably, most of us be inclined to answer that by the serpent is meant the poison of sin, the taint of corruption so universal in our nature. From the Garden of Eden downwards, we have always found the serpent taken as the symbol of evil, and we fancy that few metaphors are more appropriate. But there is very great danger lest this should be nothing more than a metaphor, lest such phrases as "original sin," "human depravity," "hereditary" corruption, which are so current in the mouth of theologians, should be mere phrases, and nothing more. If life possesses any reality at all for us, if we are working and not dreaming in the world, if we have the slightest knowledge of our own hearts, or of the hearts of others; we have learnt more of this truth than to rest in the metaphor merely. And yet it is truly astonishing how very little after all we *have* learnt what sin is; how little we see and know of that poison which has so long infected humanity, which has been for ever sapping away the life of so many millions of our brethren. Ever and anon, it is true, some portentous crime is committed, the report whereof shakes us out of our comfortable repose; now, alas, scarcely a week passes without some frightful outrage occurring which makes us shudder. But we console ourselves with the thought that these are monstrous exceptions; that murderers and felons form a very small minority amongst their fellows. Those ten commandments which the Church solemnly repeats in the ears of her children Sunday by Sunday, do find, we would fain believe, a very general observance. For the most part we hope that men do at least live moral respectable lives. And with such thoughts as these we consider the strong language used in some parts of the Bible about sin as a little exaggerated, and when such words as poison and death are used in reference to it, we instinctively refer them to a sin of which *we* personally know nothing.

But to how many of us, at the most unexpected moments, is a revelation made of a state which even *those* words fail to describe fully, a state of things of which perhaps in calmer moments we are utterly unconscious. Whilst our lives were neither above nor below the cold dull level of respectability, whilst we have been preserved from anything very outrageous by the fear possibly of public opinion, possibly of an offence against good taste; we have suddenly seen these flimsy fetters torn aside, and an upheaving of darkness and impurity which we never dreamt of before,—

> And now it seems some unseen monster lays
> His vast and filthy hands upon my will,
> Wrenching it backwards into his.

It is then perhaps more than at any other time, that we see what infinite possibilities man possesses, possibilities for unbounded evil or for unbounded good.

But all lives are not marked by such convulsions as these. There are those whose characters without possessing any great intensity, yet show calmness and consistency. Nor is it in such hours of darkness and earthquake, when the foundations of man's being are broken up, that we learn most of the dominion of sin over the soul. That lesson of sorrow is oftener learnt in another and a longer way. It is brought home to us by repeated failures, and broken resolutions, by an aching sense of something wanting, of a part of our life being gone. In spite of all our efforts to be true to ourselves, and true to others, we still ever find little hypocrisies and falsehoods intruding into our words and actions. Our best resolutions, our holiest vows, are either crushed altogether or followed up falteringly and shrinkingly. Why? Why is it that we cannot do what we ought to do, that however much we may wish it, we have not even the power to carry out our wishes?

Such a question as this is not a very easy one to answer. We may indeed answer it in words—we may be able to give very fluent and perhaps beautiful explanations of original sin and fallen human nature. But to make these words into things, to draw down that truth into our life, and live upon it and rest upon it is not quite so easy. It is because this question has ever baffled men, that we find so much that is mournful and despondent in the greatest and wisest. Amongst the old heathen, who groped in the twilight for truth, those who swept the harp of human nature as few have touched it since, brought out little but the saddest music. And in modern times those who have felt the most keenly and seen the most clearly, though moving in the daylight, have still uttered the same solemn lament, have still swelled the requiem chant of humanity. Who, more so, than He who uttered the words before us, Whose life was tinged with the deepest melancholy, Who was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief?

It is indeed a sad spectacle to see how little, how very little any man is master of himself. Drawn aside, first to the one hand and then to the other, even when he seems to be most steadily pursuing the one end he may have set before himself, a hundred things interfere with him, thwart him, perplex him. Yes, there is a poison in our system, of which the serpent-bite in the desert is but a feeble type, a poison which irritates and inflames sometimes almost to madness, and at others numbs and paralyzes and deadens all the highest and noblest and purest feelings and instincts of our nature.

Is there no remedy? Is there none who can grapple with this colossal evil? if we ourselves are powerless to help ourselves, is there no one who can fight for us, and help us, and save us?

It is not too much to say that for many, even amongst us here, life itself is little else than a series of struggles to escape. Every way is tried which is considered possible. Pleasure, asceticism, exertion, repose, calm, excitement, each is tried in succession, only to be laid down with an ever-growing feeling of weariness and disgust. The spirit vainly flutters and beats itself against the bars of its cage, and only too often, as history tells us, beats itself to death. And it is no wonder that in trying to answer this which is the most difficult, because the deepest and most important question that our lives have to answer, so many mistakes should be made. Hope may support us, Faith may strengthen and encourage us, Charity may make our path smooth, but only *one* principle in our nature can *guide* us. That principle, which is the basis of Christianity, which is the basis of all true religion, which makes man what he is, and without which he cannot be man, is the principle of *love.*

There is no more familiar spectacle to those who have looked out upon the world, than the wonderful change which is produced in almost every character by the influence of this principle. There are few hearts we would hope that are not open to some slight touch of affection. And such affection, though weak and feeble, softens the character and quickens the sympathies of the one who feels it. Love so far as it is pure and worthy of the name, is an utterly unselfish thing; and leads to a life of sacrifice and devotion. No self-denial, no privations are considered too great if they only conduce to the happiness of the loved object. And so it is that the highest sovereignty, the most absolute command over anyone is gained if you own their love. It is not power that moves the deepest heart of man, that may produce outward obedience, but in the secret councils of the soul there may be hatred and rebellion. If you wish to gain complete and undivided homage over anyone's heart; if you wish to control the will of another, not by the dead pressure of harsh command, but by the electric sympathy of a common desire, if in short you wish to become sovereign and master of the Holy of Holies of a man's nature, you must appeal, not to power, or fear, or greatness, but to *love.*

And who is he who will do so most successfully? Who is he who will win most hearts and win them most completely? Surely he who wins must love. He who is most patient and sacrificing, who is strongest and yet gentlest; who unites infinite power with infinite pity, and veils the Majesty of God in the love to men, who suffered to save, and died to bring life. "Even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life."

Here then, at last, brethren, we have got to the central truth of these verses, a truth which is brought out still more fully in the two that follow. There is an antidote to the poison, a resurrection from the death. We may and can be lifted up above ourselves, drawn away from darkness into light, raised from our misery, and wretchedness; our failures, our sins, our despair can be shaken off. Tyrannized over by weakness and slaves to irresolution, we may yet return to and obey our rightful King. For He has been lifted up as our King. He has been crowned, but with a crown of thorns; He has been enthroned, but upon the Cross, and yet He *is* our King, not demanding the obedience of outward actions but of inward thought, the homage of the soul. And He demands it through love. Not through pity for His sufferings, or admiration for His goodness—though these must ever be present—but through an infinite and unutterable love. A love such as no one else can claim; a love which asks for nothing and wants nothing, but which reposes a perfect confidence and trust in Him.

And he who loves thus, who trusts Him to the death, who believes in Him as he does in nothing else, has eternal life. This indeed must be. For that love opens up a new life, a new current of feeling, closed and dead before. A deep-flowing current, which runs underground away from the view of the world, like those streams in the desert which are only perceptible by the deep green, and rich pasture above them. A life which is not affected by time and its changes, but is calm, stedfast, eternal. A life hidden with God, sharing His eternal nature. A life which quickens all the fine faculties of the soul, making it spring to truth, and light, and holiness, making it move in loving response to the love of God. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 32.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

LORD BISHOP OF MANCHESTER,

(JAMES FRASER, D.D.)

PREACHED IN ST. STEPHEN'S CHURCH, WESTBOURNE PARK,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 1872.

Revelations xxi, 10, to 23, v.

We feel instinctively the beauty and the grandeur of this passage descriptive of the Church of Christ when she shall have passed through the successive stages of her earthly warfare and shall once more have her Lord reigning peaceably and triumphantly in her midst, all enemies subdued, all hindrances surmounted, all stains cleansed and purged away. For it is the purpose of her great Head, as St. Paul witnesses in his Epistle to the Ephesians, to make His Church a glorious Church and to present it to His Father, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it shall be holy and without blemish. It is the vision of a prophet of the Elder Dispensation repeated and renewed to an Apostle of the New. If you turn to the prophecies of Ezekiel, to that mysterious passage which closes the utterances of that great Seer of the olden time, you will find in the fortieth chapter these words "The hand of the Lord was upon me and brought me thither. In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south. And He brought me thither, and, behold, there was a man, whose appearance was like the appearance of brass, with a line of flax in his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate. And the man said unto me, Son of man, behold with thine eyes, and hear with thine ears, and set thine heart upon all that I shall shew thee; for to the intent that I might shew them unto thee art thou brought hither: declare all that thou seest to the house of Israel. And behold a wall on the outside of the house round about, and in the man's hand a measuring reed of six cubits long by the cubit and an hand breadth: so he measured the breadth of the building, one reed; and the height, one reed. Then came he unto the gate which looketh toward the east, and went up the stairs thereof, and measured the threshold of the gate," and so on. The whole vision is almost repeated in the very same words. And the meaning of it, I take it, is this, to show that God Almighty, though distributing His gifts and ordering His providence at sundry times and in divers manners, has yet had one unchanging purpose from beginning to end. The Patriarchal Dispensation was preparatory to the Mosaic, the Mosaic to the Christian and the Christian to that yet fuller development of the wealth of God's loving-kindness, when redeemed humanity—all redeemed, even though they know it not, by the one and self-same precious blood shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God.

Let me ask you to look at one more beautiful passage in the prophecies of Ezekiel and then to compare it with the one in Revelations. In the forty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel it is written:—"Afterward He brought me again unto the door of the house; and, behold, waters issued out from under the threshold of the house eastward: for the forefront of the house stood toward the east, and the waters came down from under from the right side of the house, at the south side of the altar. Then brought He me out of the way of the gate northward, and led me about the way without unto the utter gate by the way that looketh eastward; and behold, there ran out waters on the right side. And when the man that had the line in his hand went forth eastward, he measured a thousand cubits, and he brought me through the waters; the waters were to the ancles. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through the waters; the waters were to the knees. Again he measured a thousand, and brought me through; the waters were to the loins. Afterward he measured a thousand; and it was a river that I could not pass over: for the waters were risen, waters to swim in, a river that could not be passed over. And he said unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen this? Then he brought me, and caused me to return to the brink of the river. Now when I had returned, behold, at the bank of the river were very many trees on the one side and on the other. Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert, and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed. And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it, from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt. And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary; and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." And now listen to St. John:—"And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever;" and is not this—figurative though the language be, yet as it seems to me clearly intelligible—is not this the ideal after which the Church on earth should be reaching evermore, to know, as St. Paul prays that the understanding of the Ephesians might be enlightened to know the length and the breadth, the height and the depth of the Divine purposes. Ought not the marks of the living Church, of the living God, to be such as these—catholicity, extensiveness, comprehensiveness, and, above all, spirituality. Christ's fishers standing on the shore "from En-gedi even unto En-eglaim" with their nets ready for the cast, for the fishes are "exceeding many."

There are two main ideas that seem to me to stand out amidst all this figurative language, and with these two I propose mainly, if not exclusively, to deal. They are the idea of brightness and the idea of proportion. The city was full of light, not the light of the sun, nor the moon, nor of candles, nor any artificial illumination; the Lord God was its light. "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Christ is the light of the world. He came to scatter away the clouds of darkness, He came to make the whole body of the individual man, and the whole body of the Church, full of light and in no part dark. It is the kingdom of "the beast," that is, covered with darkness. Where the power of Christ's Gospel has penetrated there in the fullest and broadest sense of the term should be light. And light implies joyousness and brightness. And so we must remember we have to preach a "Gospel," not a gloomy message. I am not come here to tell all you good people to get yourselves ready for the worm that dieth not, and the fire that never shall be quenched. I am come rather—as every one of Christ's messengers should come—rather to tell you to get yourselves ready for that joy of the Lord which is prepared for all His faithful servants. Christ Himself, it is true, was a man of sorrows. It has been said, I forget by whom, that it is not recorded that He was even so much as once seen to smile; and yet, possibly, He had moments of refreshment in that simple cottage at Bethany, where He was wont to spend His evenings, from time to time, with Lazarus and those two sisters who always made Him welcome. His life was not as the Frenchman has described it, a mere idyllic life, like purling brooks beneath shady foliaged trees; it was not that, it was a life of sorrow on the whole; and yet I take it a life not unrelieved by joy. And at any rate, He has told us, or at least told His Apostles—and the words have been handed down to our time—Ye now have sorrow at the thoughts of my going away. I have told ye that in a little while I go away, and because I have said these things unto you sorrow hath filled your hearts. Ye now, therefore, have sorrow. Yet I will see you again, and your hearts shall rejoice, and that joy no man taketh from you. And so Christ did see His Church again, and they saw Him again, not with the bodily eye, but with the eye of faith, saw Him as Stephen saw Him standing at God's right hand ready to help all them that trust in Him we read of those primitive Christians, dark though their light seemed to be, and uncertain the future before them, how, "continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart; praising God, and having favour with all the people." And so we can understand the force and emphasis with which Paul three times over charges the Phillippians to "rejoice in the Lord—rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice." And so, though there is a dark side to Christianity, and though there is a gloomy prospect in the future, and though we do not mean, nor desire, nor should we be justified in putting out of sight those solemn sad words which Paul speaks to the Hebrews—*if it be Paul who wrote that Epistle*—"It remaineth unto all men once to die, and after that the judgment," still we do not wish, from our pulpits, to ring forth doctrines which depress and dishearten men. Our business is rather to lift up the feeble hands and brace the tottering knees; to bind up the broken heart, to preach "the jubilee—the acceptable year of the Lord." Never let us forget that the message which Christ brought into the world was "glad tidings of great joy."

And so, if the doctrine should be joyous, the worship should be joyous, and bright, and cheery too. The great feature of Christianity is hope. Heathen religions fostered despair. Any one who has read the poems of Lucretius knows the sad tone that runs through them; and even the brighter-eyed Virgil would say, "we see all things rushing backward by a sort of inevitable destiny." The Romans thought society was wretched because the world's prospects were so dark before them; but not so with us who live in the sunshine of the gospel. No doubt there is, and must be, an element of sadness in our worship when we think how unworthy we are of the manifold mercies which God our Father has so bountifully provided for us; and yet even when we think of our unworthiness there will be an overmastering element of confidence and even of joy. That prodigal son, of whom we read in the parable, on his journey back to his father's home, no doubt travelled with his mind laden with many bitter memories and yet with hope predominating over all. Was he not going back to a father? And so, perhaps, in our ritual it may be thought by some that the elements of sadness predominate in undue proportion. We have our confessions we have our litanies, we say those prayers of the litany with penitential voice and low on bended knees; but yet methinks, even there is an undercurrent of joy. We cry to the good Lord to deliver us, and while we cry we believe He will deliver. We ask the Lamb of God to give us His peace, and we trust that He will make good His word. And there is no joy, no peace, like the joy and the peace in believing; no brightness like that of a soul on which the sun of righteousness hath shone.

And now to pass on to the other thought, the thought of proportion. The whole of this great city was of a certain proportion. It was all measured out with a measuring rod, and every part fitted to the other, and the length and the breadth and the height of it were equal. You will notice that this one idea of proportion runs through the visions both of Ezekiel and John. And so in the spiritual Church of Christ to which you and I belong, and of whose glories these visions were but faint images; proportion is the great law of Christ's gospel, both in its dogmatic and its practical aspects. Let me first speak, then, of its practical proportions. I ask you to see to it, my brethren, that you are all growing up into Christ which is the head proportionately and equally. You know that beautiful passage in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians where Paul describes the proportion that ought to pervade the whole Church—how it should be "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, making increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." And so with individuals, if we are to fit into our proper places in this holy temple as living stones there must be the law of proportion operating upon ourselves. Not only must our reason be illuminated, not only must we hold an intelligent faith and be able, as Peter says, to give any man that asks us "a reason for the hope that is in us;" but our affections must be purified, our consciences must be guided, our wills must be strengthened. I think we must all admit that there is an inequality and disproportion in our lives. We are not quite the same in our very looks and bearing in God's house as we are in our own houses. We are not the same in our own houses as we are in our business hours, in our warehouses, and in the transactions of daily life. There wants more proportion in our lives; more of the sense that wherever we are, and whatever we do, there should be a spirit in us which should keep down not only all pride, not only all selfishness, not only all impurity, but even all levity and frivolity. And so there must be a proportion also in doctrine, in what we teach, and in what you believe; because I do not imagine that any of you accept teaching from pulpits now unquestioningly. You claim, to have the right, and you have the right, and I do not wish to deny it to you, of judging of what you hear by the reason which God has given to you who hear as well as to us who preach. Therefore, we say, there must be proportion in doctrine—in doctrine taught, doctrine received, doctrine held. If any man prophecy, says Paul, let him prophecy according to the proportion, the analogy of faith. I have heard it said of Dr. Chalmers, that it was one of his rules to a young minister that he should unfold the whole plan of salvation in every sermon, and his reason for it was this, that it might happen that in the congregation there was one man who had never heard that whole plan before, and might not again, and, therefore, for his sake the whole plan was to be unfolded. I do not know whether he who gave the precept acted upon it, but if most of us were to do so we should very soon empty our Churches. St. Paul wisely drew the distinction between milk for babes and strong meat for men. I heard it announced just now that there would be a children's service this afternoon, and if I were preaching specially to children, I should hardly touch upon some of the doctrines I have spoken of to you; and Christ Himself we are told preached His word to the people as they were able to bear it.

But besides this proportion in doctrine there should also be a proportion in worship. There is some peril, I take it, just now of disproportion in this matter. Some doctrines and some usages are being brought out of their proper places, and are made to occupy too prominent a position in the thoughts of Christian people, and so are distorted. You can for yourselves easily imagine what particular doctrines and what particular practices I have in my mind. I may mention just two.

There is the doctrine of Confession. Instead of being simply as the Church of England meant it to be, a comfort to those who cannot guide their own consciences, it is now made in some instances an almost necessary condition of the development of spiritual life. And again the Lord's Supper is absorbing into itself more and more, if not the whole, at any rate the chief place in Christian worship, and with a strange lamentable inconsistency is being treated as a sacrifice instead of a chief means of grace. And just now there seems to be special need for the operation of this principle of proportion and applying it to one more case; I will then make an end. We know that men's minds have been greatly agitated by theological questions for the last thirty or forty years, and unhappy extravagances of opinions and of practices needing to be corrected—they would not be corrected by fatherly admonitions—needing to be corrected therefore by unhappier prosecutions in Ecclesiastical Courts. They worked men's minds into a state of feverish excitement, very unfavourable to the fair and equitable consideration of great questions. For myself, standing aloof as I have always tried to stand aloof from all Ecclesiastical parties, I cannot but be amazed at the temper of mind which in a great crisis between Faith and Infidelity; in the mighty battle that is waging all around us between the powers of good and evil spends its energies on matters which can hardly be said to edify souls—some of them can hardly be expressed in intelligible language.

But still I have read Church history and I know the fascination which special and partial aspects of doctrine and of worship have exercised on minds of a certain type. I know also the law, for it is so regular in its recurrence that it almost looks like a law—I know also the law of re-actions. In 1849 there was given a famous Ecclesiastical judgment which seemed to some minds to empty the Sacraments of the Gospel of their spiritual virtue, and power, and even in cases where there was no resisting medium to the entrance of grace into the soul seemed to strip those Sacraments of that grace which they are meant to signify, and which in the teaching of the Church of England they are intended to convey. That judgment was perhaps, the culminating point of a system of doctrine which up to that day had exercised no inconsiderable sway over the theology of England. Since then, by this law of re-action the tendency has been in a reverse direction, and sacraments have threatened to usurp a place in Christian teaching which, to any fair minded reader, they do not seem to occupy, in the doctrine of Christ or the expositions of that doctrine by the Apostle Paul. And on Saturday another judgment was given, the most momentous since that Gorham controversy, to which I have referred of three and twenty years ago; and language which in the words of the Judges is censured as "rash and ill-judged and perilously near a violation of the law" is yet not penally or formally condemned or held to be absolutely irreconcilable with the Church's teaching in her formularies and articles. And as this is a tribunal which has been much maligned it is worth while to notice this judgment. Their Lordships say—"The committee have not allowed any feeling of disapproval to interfere with the real duty before them which is to decide whether the language of the respondent is so clearly repugnant to the articles and formularies of the Church as to call for judicial condemnation, and as these proceedings are highly penal, to construe in his favour, every reasonable doubt."

It will be a lamentable thing, I imagine we shall all agree, if this equitable moderate, considerate, nay, I will call it, charitable language is abused, and if extreme men begin to chant their pæans; if what they will call a "victory" is pushed to the utmost extremity. We need in this day of ours moderation—the moderation and the fair-mindedness of such a great and statesman-like divine, as was Richard Hooker. We need too, peace. The Church cannot make progress whilst the very foundations of the faith, as so many think, are being undermined, and if not undermined, disturbed. The great German professor whose name is associated with the old Catholic movement from which I—I dare say in common with many sanguine minds,—anticipate so much in the future of the Christian Church—has taught that the task of theology is in our day to be conceived in quite a new spirit. Formerly it has been polemical or controversial, it must now become irenical or peacemaking. We need to provoke to faith and not to scepticism, to mutual love and good works, not to mutual rivalries and hatreds. "Where faith and love exist," says this great divine—"Where faith and love exist there hope will not be wanting as the third in the bright band.

He who believes, and enquires, cannot shut himself out from the expectation that a not all-too-distant future will bring a church which, in her purified form as the true successor of the Church of the first uncorrupted centuries, shall have room and attractive power for those who are now severed from her, a Church in which freedom with moderation, with order, discipline, morality, purity of faith, intelligence, and unfettered enquiry may be able to exist together." May the Lord our God hasten it in His time, and may we have patience to wait for its coming.

THE HILL OF DOTHAN.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. EDWARD HUSBAND,

Curate and Precentor of Folkestone, Kent,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH, FOLKESTONE, KENT,

ON THE SUNDAY AFTER ASCENSION DAY, 1872.

"*And Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see.*"—2 Kings vi, 17.

Benhadad, the King of Syria, (as you find in this Chapter from which my text is taken) declared war against Israel. It is the old story often told in the history of mankind, of "wars, and rumours of wars;" of "fightings without and fears within."

We find that the Syrian King took counsel with his servants, settling with them where he should pitch his camp. But Elisha sent unto the King of Israel and told him not to pass the place where the Syrians were, and this message, saved him there, "not once, nor twice." But when Benhadad heard of this, he was astonished to find that all his plans were known as quickly at Samaria as in his own territory, and judging Elisha to be the author of these revelations, he sent a large body of troops to invest Dothan, the place where Elisha "the man of God" resided, and to seize the Prophet.

Now Dothan was a city or village built upon a hill "or large mound," and is placed upon the caravan track from Syria to Egypt. Along its ancient road was often heard, in the olden days, the tramp of the camels and the music of their tinkling bells. Dothan was celebrated for its beautiful pasture ground, and it was at this place that Joseph's brethren had wandered with their flocks from Shechem, and where he was treacherously sold by them to the Ishmaelites. At the time of which my text speaks it was night-fall at Dothan; Elisha, "the man of God," his servant, and all those who were with him slept. The city was hushed into silence, and the winds scarce moaned at all, and the heavenly star-light shone down upon the sleeping city. But while this sweet repose was going on within the city, a mighty host of armed men, with countless chariots and horses, were moving on in the still darkness towards Dothan, where the Prophet lay. And before the rising of the morning-sun; before the day-light gladdened the city, Benhadad's Syrian host had compassed the city round about. So vast, so immense was that host, that it surrounded the city on every side! And Elisha's servant, faithful to his duty, rose early in the morning, and went forth and came to the borders of the city. What was his dismay, when he found poor Dothan, his master's home, encompassed by armies! Then rushes the servant home to his master to tell him the terrible news, crying out, "*Alas, my master! how shall we do?*" Oh! servant of Elisha! where was thy faith? Benhadad trusted in his chariots and horses! Elisha trusted in his God! "*Fear not!*"—cries Elisha to his servant,—"*for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*"

Now this assertion puzzled the servant of Elisha altogether, Was he not to believe his eyes? There was the host entirely shutting the city in, there was the almost numberless multitude, there was their King in his golden array, there were his armed men, there were his chariots, and there were his horses. And here, comparatively, was poor weak Israel. Where were their thousands of armed men? Where were their chariots? Where were their horses? Few, very, very few! And yet Elisha would have his servant believe that there were more chariots, and more horses, and more armed men on Israel's side, than yonder Syrian King could boast of! But the servant could not understand it, and as his faith was small, Elisha prayed to the God who heareth, and who answereth prayer, and said in the words of my text, "Lord, I pray Thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha." This is the wondrous narrative, my beloved brethren, from which, at this Ascension-tide, I wish to draw a few practical lessons

Let me, first of all, lay down my central truth, from which I wish to draw my lessons. It is this. Elisha is a figure of Jesus Christ, acting after the Ascension.

"Farewell! and yet not farewell," was the kind of strain which underlay our Anthems on Ascension Day. Jesus has ascended to His Father's right hand of glory! As He was in the very act of blessing His Apostles at Bethany, the great silver cloud bowed itself down, and enshrined His Ascending Form, like a father who embraces his children in the arms of his love.

"His Rising Form on Olivet
A summer's shadow cast:
The branches of the hoary trees
Drooped as the shadow passed."

What a moment it must have been *after* the cloud and the angels had gone. Nothing but a blue, free, clear, azure sky. He was gone! all gone! The angels had gone home, and the blue sky alone remained, without the shadow of a passing cloud! Yet, as I was saying on Ascension Day, the Disciples returned to Jerusalem *with great joy!* Had they mourned, or feared, or lamented, they would have been like Elisha's servant, who had not sufficient faith to see within the veil. But they had faith enough to know, that although the *visible* Presence of Jesus was taken away from their midst, still there was the same Presence, though an invisible One, as really in their midst in the Blessed Sacrament. The natural eyesight could only behold Benhadad's army, and the little few in Israel's camp, but the eye of faith could behold the Mountain, covered with chariots and horses of fire!

And now to apply this to ourselves. But before doing so individually, let us bring it to bear upon the Church as a whole. You and I, within the Church, and those who unhappily live without her pale, are sometimes staggered at what we behold. We know the Church internally is one united family in Christ; we know that her Lord's prayer for her was that she should be visibly one, but we see her rent and torn. We see what we regard as disastrous events happening to her. We witness events which, so we think, hinder the ultimate triumph of His kingdom. We see many who profess to belong to her denying the very Faith which she professes. Infidelity, the Antichrist of these latter days, prowls about within her, alarming, and even shaking the belief of those whose faith is small. In short, we see the Church undergoing a process of attack from enemies without and foes within; and in our trouble we cry—*What will be the result of all this?*

Results? What do you or I know about *results?* These things which are happening to the Church, are not really adverse events; they are part of the Eternal Decrees—they are links in that mysterious chain, which God in His Wise Providence has decreed for His Church. These things must happen before the end can come.

But I will tell you, dear brethren, what we are so apt to do. We go to the outskirts of our Dothan, and we look at the mighty Syrian host that surrounds us; and we cry as Elisha's servant did,—"Alas, my master! how shall we do?" Oh why do we not exercise more faith, if it be but as the grain of mustard seed, and look at Dothan's mountain, and there see the horses, and chariots of fire, protecting the City of the Lord! Nothing can harm the Church of the Living God. Read the accounts of the many different sects which have sprung up from time to time. You will find that they have in the course of time died out one by one. Read the history of the Catholic Church of Christ! It lives still! It is the same Church—it is to-day the Church of Jesus; of His blessed Apostles; of St. Paul; of St. Peter; of St. John. The summers and the winters of nearly 1,900 years have not destroyed its greenness; but like a tree in springtime, it is as green, and fresh, and vigorous as if it had been planted but yestermorn! I repeat again, why our faith becomes shaken; why our hope and love burn dimly; why our despondency sometimes is so great, is because we are so faithless; so earthly; so foolish; that we *will* keep on looking and trembling at the sight of the Syrian host that encompasses the vineyard of our Lord, and will not sufficiently, or with a reasonable faith, turn our eyes to the Hill of Dothan, where "they that be with us, are more than they that be with them."

But to apply this truth more particularly to our own individual souls.

I know not how it strikes you; but to my own mind this truth is beautiful beyond words—that around each believer in Jesus, if his eyes could but be opened to see into the world of Spirits, (as the eyes of the servant of Elisha were,) we should behold a host of shining ones, protecting us, and shielding u from harm. Do we realize the fact, that now, as I wave my hand through the air, it is passing through the invisible forms of spirits? No doubt this church is crowded with spirits—I shudder to utter it; some evil spirits, other good. The evil spirits attendant upon those unrepentant sinners who are here in our midst to-night; the good spirits attendant upon those who have been converted and live. Perhaps the spirits of the dead. Perhaps the spirits of some whose bodies sleep beneath this pavement, or in the outer church-yard! Perhaps the spirits of some, who a few Sundays ago were with us in our midst, but who have since been called away! Perhaps St. Paul is here in this church; or St. Peter; or St. James; or St. John. We know Jesus is here; for wherever two or three are gathered together in His Name, there is He in the midst of them. Would to God, brethren, we could realize this truth yet more. Am I at home, too sick to be at church: that sickness is a hill of Dothan, around which the blessed Ones linger. Wherever I go; whatever pathway I tread, I am surrounded with a multitude of the heavenly spirits! Think of this every evening when you lie down to rest. Exercise your faith then, and see the outspread wings, so white and shining, spread over you to guard you from harm. Think of this when you go out to your business in the morning. Be not so earthly as to think you wander forth alone; exercise your gift of faith, and see a multitude of blessed spirits accompanying you. Think of this when you say goodbye to some dear friend. Be not so foolish as to judge yourself to be a lonely, deserted one; open the eyes of your faith and behold "the innumerable company of witnesses." Think of this when duty calls to forsake home and kindred. The foaming, billowy sea; the almost trackless country; the towering, snow-capt mountain will not hinder the march of the blessed Spirits as they accompany you. If only ye have faith; if only your trust is in Jesus; every place, every position, every circumstance becomes a hill of Dothan to you, encompassed by a host of protectors, and companions, from the Better Land.

But to pass on. From persons, let us now pass to things. Every circumstance in life has its invisible guardians. If only we had a little more faith, we should see that every sorrow has its heavenly host to surround it. When we have a great sorrow, or burden to bear, we are so apt to turn our eyes towards the Syrian host. We aggravate our troubles; we increase our burden by doing so. We count the number of Benhadad's army; we number his chariots and his horses; until our sorrows become so great, that we know not how to endure them. Oh! that we would turn our eyes round to the hill of Dothan, and look at our sorrows and troubles in the light of the chariots of fire. Oh! that we would turn our backs upon the armies of this world, and gaze with loving faith upon the conquerors of Heaven. Oh! that our hearts would enlarge themselves, and believe more in the invisible realities with which we are surrounded, and trust less in those things which we can see with our earthly eyes. The heaviest burden; the most terrible sorrow that was ever borne, was endured by Jesus for our sakes. You remember that Judas came with his band, and betrayed Him with a kiss. What did Jesus then assert? Why, that He could then pray to His Father, and He would give Him more than twelve legions of Angels. Our sorrows are nothing when compared with those of Jesus, but there are the twelve legions of angels to wrestle for us, and to help us in the way. Brethren, believe me, there is not a sorrow, not a heartache, not a burden, which is not surrounded with the kind, compassionate Heavenly Host. It does not require more than earthly eyesight to see our sorrow, our trouble; but it does require spiritual eyesight to behold the succour which Jesus sends us. In other words, we can, with our natural eyesight behold Benhadad and his Syrian host; but only the eye of faith can discern Dothan's shining mountain covered with horses and chariots of fire.

Once more, apply this truth to the closing scene in men's lives. I mean death. How do the majority of men regard death? Surely, just as Elisha's servant looked at his trouble. He looked at the earthly side of it. So do most men look at death. They look at the death sweat that stands upon the brow; they listen to the hard breathing; they look at the coffin; at the shroud; at the pall; and lastly, at the cold dark grave! But if that departed one had trusted his soul to Christ, why should they not turn round, and look at death in the light of the glory crowned hill of Dothan? They would there see none of those gloomy attendants on death! The earthly side of the picture would be gone! It would be the heavenly side. Instead of the funeral or the grave, would be seen the horses and chariots of fire. There would be seen the City of Rest; the unnumbered multitude of white-robed spirits; best, and chief of all, the glory-crowned, ascended Jesus! The reason why the death, even of the believer, is so enveloped to some of us, in gloom and sadness, is because we *will* look at Benhadad's army, instead of at the glorious hill of Dothan! Oh! my brethren; my dear, dear brethren, would to God that I could this night persuade you all to turn your backs upon the Syrian host; and to keep your eyes fixed upon Jesus. Oh! that God the Holy Ghost would this night bring home these words spoken in weakness, to the hearts of those, who in this congregation have not yet given themselves to the Lord! "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hill, from whence cometh my help." Let this, my beloved brethren, be your firm determination.

And lastly, may such thoughts as these help us all to be less earthly; less sensual for the future. I do not under-value the difficulty which we in this present condition, and with a body of sin and death about us experience, when we try to realize the things unseen. I know how hard a thing faith is; how difficult it is to believe. I know how easy it is to cry with Elisha's servant—"Alas! my master, how shall we do?" when we behold the enemy encircling us on every hand. I am ashamed to say it, but I know how hard it is at all times, and under all circumstances to trust to that which is invisible to mortal eyesight; but we must do it, brethren, as children of a Heavenly Father. We must—not for a day; a month; or a year—we must *live a life* of faith in the Eternal Son of God. This is necessary—it is not a mere matter of choice. The *visible* Presence of Jesus is withdrawn from our midst. Ascension day has decided that point. I will tell you, beloved brethren, what your life and mine, to the end of the checkered way must be—"*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.*"

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 33.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. T. ARMFIELD, M.A.,

Vice-Principal of the Theological College, Salisbury, Vicar of the Close, and Minor Canon of Sarum, Etc.,

PREACHED IN THE NAVE OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL,

On Monday, March 25, 1872.

(The Festival of the Dedication of the Cathedral.)

"*I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem.*"—Song of Solomon, i, 5.

"The distinguished and glorious Church of Sarum"—Insignis et prœclara Ecclesia Sarum. Such is the honourable title by which in old time this Cathedral was distinguished amongst other churches of the same rank and magnitude. The distinction, it is universally conceded in our time, was well deserved, first, perhaps, in consideration of the unparalleled elegance of the structure itself—one of the very best works of the best period of English art; but still more for that immense service which the Use of Sarum rendered to the English Communion in furnishing a traditional and historic basis for the ritual of our own period. We are keeping, therefore, on this St. Mary's Day, not only the Festival of the Inauguration of Christ's Human Nature, but also the dedication of one of the most distinguished churches which the Christianity of this country ever produced.

There are three or four lines of thought arising out of such an occasion which converge upon the text. There is, to begin with, the obvious application of the image (as of so much else in the, Song of Solomon), not to the literal marriage of the literal Solomon to some dark beauty of the East, but to that marriage in the Person of a Greater than Solomon, who as upon this Annunciation Day united to Himself this human nature of ours and made it His Bride—this human nature which thus speaks in the character of the bride, " I am black, but comely ; " black through the sad history of the past ; but comely, through those possibilities of grace and glory which this new marriage has conferred.

Throughout the Song of Solomon one may acknowledge the undeniable propriety whereby the marriage is taken for the union of the Human Nature with the Divine in the Person of Our Blessed Lord, the Human Nature being the Bride ; we may do this without at all accepting that kindred line of interpretation, whereby the Blessed Virgin is made herself the bride. Solomon is of course the Christ, in the Divine allegory : and the Bride may be the Human Nature which He took upon Himself ; or she may be the Church so often spoken of under this figure ; or again, she may be the individual Soul of the devout Christian : but to say that the bride is His mother, *quâ* mother, in her motherly relation to Him—this would seem to be a process which involves nothing less than the cutting the moorings of sacred imagery altogether, and leaving it to drift in whatever direction the eccentricities of human fancy or even the needs of human controversy might point it. It is not possible, as it would appear, to trace the existence of this line of interpretation farther back than those later centuries of Christian history, when the reverence which the Church had always paid to the holy Virgin of to-day began to take a vicious direction. Yet before dismissing it there is one reason why I should notice the singular influence which it has been supposed to have had upon Christian art. " I am black, but comely "— this very text is thought by some to have suggested one of those freaks of art in the region of the grotesque, which medieval artists seem to have admitted into company with the most sacred subjects. It may be known to some in this assembly that in many parts of Europe St. Mary, the Virgin, is represented as a negress. Wherever such an image exists, it is the object of the very highest reverence; the choicest lace and the richest jewels of the Sacristy are reserved for its adornment; and the popular interpretation of the singularity is that such images are artistic expressions of the text, "I am black, but comely." I should reject indeed both the theology and the art of such an application; yet, while one might be tempted just to touch upon it at any time in connexion with the text, there is one especial reason why it should be noticed by one preaching here on this Salisbury day. It is because one of the most famous examples of a Black Virgin forms the crowning treasure of a French Cathedral of which a Salisbury man became not only Bishop, but perhaps the most distinguished bishop of its whole line. The Black Virgin is the pride of the ancient Cathedral of Chartres, in which the celebrated John of Salisbury—a man of such mark that in collected editions of the Fathers for the use of the Roman Communion, they print his works amongst them—rose to be the most eminent of Bishops.

But we must not linger here. The text, I would say, has one of its meanings in that Human Nature which the Lord Jesus as it were began on this Annunciation Day; but it has none, as I am inclined to believe, from putting it into the mouth of the mother of that Human Nature.

"I am black, but comely,"—that is, as Origen* seems to take it, black, dingy, uninviting to outward appearance, yet lovely in the inner, unseen structure of limb and frame; unattractive to the gaze of the casual and superficial beholder, yet gifted with a latent strength and beauty.

On this dedication day of our great Cathedral I would ask you, do you not recognize in that description exactly the taunt that has of late years been so often levelled at Cathedral Churches as a class? Cumbrous machines, they have been freely called, without elasticity and without one throb of sympathy for the vigorous life all around them; cathedrals asleep, while lesser churches were alive and busy; the mere sepulchres of a dead sentiment, yet with a prestige that invests them with magnificent capacities, if only they were not too stupefied to feel it—black, in actuality; potentially, comely.

It was but the natural utterance of such a temper, when men battling with the sterner forms of evil asked somewhat angrily, what is the use of a cathedral at all? They could not do otherwise than jeer the answers they commonly received. What wonder if they soon assumed that no real answer could be given to the question? They smiled when you told them of an occasional gathering of choirs as a justification of gigantic naves: when you told them of ordinations, they replied that these might as profitably take place elsewhere: if you spoke of services, they hinted that nobody went except he was obliged. But they forgot one thing; they forgot that one great value of a Cathedral Church lay in the fact that it *is* a Cathedral Church; that in it is contained the throne—the Cathedra—of the Bishop. The cathedral, in fact, is the Church's outward expression of her belief in the office of the Bishop. And here, I take it, is one answer to the question. A cathedral is valuable, because it is the embodiment of a valuable idea. It is no answer to say that the idea is independent of such embodiment and might exist without it. In theory it might, no doubt; but practically it could not. Men do not live in the clouds. Ideas, if they are the focus of substantial convictions, if they are anything but dreams, inevitably make for themselves some visible exhibition. And here, we say, is the legitimate, the inevitable expression of the Church's profound belief in the office of the Bishop. It is of course conceivable that owing to stress of circumstances a bishop might once again be forced to live in private with the simplicity of a monk, rather than in the state and ceremony of a peer; but it is not conceivable that men who hold the belief of churchmen should leave his official presence unsurrounded by a sacred state and circumstance. You might fairly say, if so you thought, that cathedrals had been disappointing institutions under any actual systems you have tried; but it is mere Quixotism to assail cathedrals, *as* such, without having first obliterated the ideas which centre in the office of the Bishop. You might pull down your cathedrals to-morrow; but the devout instinct of churchmen would at once begin again, and would not rest till it had reared about the throne of the Bishop the grandest church which the art of the day might be competent to create.

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* Hom 2 in Cant: ap. S. Hieron: Opera.

And yet once again. "Black, but comely." Black in respect of what we are; yet comely in respect of what we might be, of the capabilities that we have within us. Black, I would say, because men have first cheapened and then scouted the principle that constitutes our *raison d'étre*—the principle, I mean, that the worship of Almighty God is in itself an object worthy of man's highest efforts and costliest sacrifices. That principle we have allowed to be thrust into a subordinate place in the discussion : and into sad difficulties the neglect of it has led us. There must be something strangely wrong, some fundamental obliquity in men's vision, when it takes them thirty years to debate upon a simple question, and at the end of it they have to confess that they have left it still unsolved. Yet such is the case here. Now for thirty years men have been periodically harassing themselves with the question, "What was that wonderful thing which these cathedrals were meant to do? And how can we get hold of the secret for our own society?" And these questions have been asked and answered till there seem to be almost as many theories about cathedrals as there are cathedrals themselves. But I do not know why we should be at any pains to invent theories about a church. A church surely answers plainly enough about itself! A church surely means Worship, as plainly as a house means Dwelling. The men who built this queen of churches, built it because they believed in worship, and because they wanted—not necessarily to the exclusion of everything else—but because they wanted, primarily and indispensably, worship. If they had wanted a retreat for learned leisure, then they might have built a library, with perhaps an oratory as an adjunct of it, but they would not have built a cathedral; if they had wanted a centre of education in theology or in letters, they might have built a college with, no doubt, a chapel as an element in it, but they would not have built a cathedral; if they had wanted a place of head-quarters for diocesan business, they might conceivably have built a board-room, but they certainly would not have built a cathedral. No: they knew distinctly what they wanted, and were satisfied as they gazed upon these magnificent creations which head, and heart, and hand had continued to raise. And if we cannot satisfy ourselves about the purpose of their work, it is, as I believe, because we have made a transposition that is fatal,—because we have made that primary which they made secondary and *vice versâ*—they put worship first, and trusted to the devout life for the rest; we, in our discussions, have tried to put fancy objects first, and pushed the worship rather behind the door, and therefore with a grand church—and not a college or a library—upon our hands, we have reduced ourselves to the helpless empiricism of men who have disregarded the one single factor which could make their problem solve.

Here, it seems to me—in the failure of past manipulators of our system to recollect that a cathedral is above all things else a church, and that the primary significance of a church is Worship—here is the secret of whatever weakness may fairly be charged upon us. We, whose privilege it is to minister in the several cathedrals of the English communion, have sometimes complained of a want of sympathy, even at the hands of those who belong to our own profession. It is a misfortune that a chill of feeling should be even so much as suspected towards these which ought to be the strongest, as they are the most imposing churches in our possession. It would be worth any effort to do that for cathedrals which should make them for their work's sake—what they already are for their artistic rank—objects of the spontaneous praise of earnest men, rather than those of unsparing disparagement or silent condemnation. The want of sympathy alleged may, no doubt, be partly due to the apparent exclusiveness of our system—to the existence of a privileged body of men in the midst of their brethren without any definite function, and sometimes, it is hinted, without any special qualification. This is by no means all; yet every source of possible strength is worth investigation. And accordingly it is a question worth considering whether this cause of an alienation of feeling from us might not in a great measure be removed without serious revolution. We call the cathedral church the mother church of the diocese. Why then, it might be asked, should the clergy of a diocese have absolutely no more relation to their mother church than is possessed by the clergy of any other diocese? Why should the clergyman be no more than the layman directly he comes here? Why should not every clergyman in a diocese have conceded to him some distinct relation to his cathedral church? Why, for instance, should not every clergyman in a diocese have conceded to him the right to come and take his seat here with us, *as* a clergyman in the mother church? I have no right to speak as representing the wishes or opinions of other cathedral clergy; but for my own part, I would gladly sacrifice the distinction which our exclusive privilege confers upon us, for the sake of that larger sympathy, which such a concession would be likely to attract.

But in a far higher degree the lack of sympathy towards cathedrals has been due to the fact that in many instances they have realized absolutely no ideal at all. The thing is in our own power. Let us own that the meaning written upon such walls as these is Worship, and try to realize the conception so placed before us; let us own that these choirs mean grand services, and that these naves mean grand sermons and grand multitudes; let us throw ourselves with a downright enthusiasm into the spirit of such an ideal, not content with a mere routine of duty such as usage or statute may prescribe, but determined to make cathedrals useful to as many souls as possible; let us from time to time even invent services that may touch them, and day by day let us present—what hitherto we have not presented—services which shall both in conception and execution in some measure respond to the educated art instincts of the day: and then I warrant you, there would be no lack of sympathy for us; then the mass of clergy who might be gathered here at some future Dedication Festival, would go back to their homes with hearts gladdened and strengthened for us, declaring that we are indeed comely; and then, as we asked our peers and squires to make us handsome gifts for the outer comeliness of our Church, we should be able not only to remind them that here are contained the tombs of their ancestors, but that here they would be maintaining and contributing to one of the most unquestionable amongst the moral and spiritual forces of contemporary life.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. J. WILLMORE HOOPER,

Rector of Gateshead Fell,

PREACHED AT ST. CUTHBERT'S CHURCH, BENSHAM,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, APRIL 21, 1872.

"*And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.*"—Isaiah xxxii, 2.

I want to speak to you this evening of the preciousness of Christ. I want to declare to you something of the fulness, the completeness of hope and peace which those possess who possess the love of Jesus. I want, if God permit, to touch a chord in your hearts which may arouse a sense of deep thankfulness to our Father in heaven for His great mercy in giving to us the priceless blessing of His dear Son. I want to speak to you of the Gospel as a means of joy and happiness amidst every misfortune that may try, amidst every sorrow that may threaten to overwhelm, amidst every temptation that may assail.

I said "if God permit." For let me state at once that unless your hearts be attuned by God's Holy Spirit, no words of mine or of any man can have any effect to make you feel what I wish that you should feel. There is nothing in which the cunning of man's words so miserably fails as in preaching the simple yet glorious message of the Gospel. Even though I could speak to you with the mightiest and most moving eloquence which the mind can conceive—even though, with the power of my spirit acting upon your spirits, I could melt you to tears—even though I could hold you spell-bound, as you have seen vast multitudes held, by the magic of genius finding its expression in words which glow and burn—even though I could do all this, not a single heart would be moved to see the beauty and value of the Gospel, unless there were another influence behind, unless there were also the all-powerful voice of God's loving spirit speaking to your hearts in its own irresistible tones. And I suppose that here, as in every congregation gathered together to worship God, I am speaking to two distinct classes of persons, namely, those who have been taught by the voice of God's Spirit to realize the preciousness of Christ, and those who are still unawakened to that preciousness. For those who know Christ in all His beauty, I may fairly hope that my poor words this evening may have something of power and blessing, may be the means, at all events to some extent, of quickening them in their spiritual life, of giving them a keener sense of the inestimable blessing which they enjoy. But for the rest—for those who are content to go on without knowing Christ—my language must needs be, so to speak, meaningless. The message of the Gospel to him who is thoroughly absorbed in the world is as a message of divinest music sounded in the ears of one who is deaf. God must make the ears hearing ears before the sweetness of the melody can be perceived.

You will see that something of this kind is pre-supposed in the words of my text. "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." Every one of the beautiful similes which are here used, denotes a want, a state of desire, a craving, unrest. The message of the Gospel, in its power and efficacy, is for those who have been taught by God's Holy Spirit that they *need* the Gospel. It is when a man's heart has been broken by penitence —when he feels his own utter helplessness, of himself, to perform any righteous act—when he is conscious of the deep-rooted estrangement which there is between him and God—it is then that he comes to see the necessity of the Gospel-message and the true preciousness of Christ; it is then that he begins to cling to the Cross of Christ as his only refuge and his only way of escape; it is then that Jesus becomes to him a hiding place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. But till you feel this, how can you see any preciousness about Christ? If your hearts are full of the world, there can be no room for Jesus. If you are going on satisfied with life as it is, if the pleasures and the follies and the sins and the pursuits of earth give you all that you want, if you are content with life and find no need for anything better and higher than the husks which you are eating for your daily food, why the news of Christ is but as an idle story. Why talk to a man of a hiding place from the storm who sees no tempest? Why speak to one of rivers of water who knows no thirst? Why describe the refreshing shadow of a great rock to him who feels not the heat of the sun? To such, the words of a man who declares the preciousness of Christ are, I say, as the words of an unknown tongue—full of power, it may be, full of earnestness, possessing all the evident intensity of set purpose and conviction on the part of the speaker, but meaning nothing for the listener. Oh, my beloved brethren in Christ, I beseech you, in the Name of Him who gave His own dear Son to die that you might live—I beseech you to pray to Him that He will enable you to hear with hearing ears—that He will teach you that sweet language in which the lesson of the Gospel can be learnt. Believe me that, however deeply you may be absorbed in the pleasures and pursuits of this world, however thoroughly you may be content to go on in them, there is no real and lasting satisfaction in such things. The only way of safety, the only path of real happiness, is to know the utter emptiness and folly of every object and desire of this life—to learn that Christ must be our all if we would have true joy either in time or in eternity.

And, on my part, how shall I describe, or even attempt to describe, the real preciousness of Christ. It is like trying to say what sunshine is like. Words utterly fail. You scarce know where to begin. You see the glorious rays lingering over the landscape in a flood of sweet golden light; and the intensity of its glory is so great that you think nothing can be easier than to convey a sense of it in words. But try to do so, and you cannot. It transcends all language. So it is with that sunshine of the heart—Christ dwelling there. His presence invests everything with beauty and joy; but he who experiences the blessedness of it can hardly tell another what it is like. The most powerful of tongue-coined words become weak when we attempt to describe what Christ is to the believer.

Let us then fall back upon the language of the great prophet, who, prompted by God, told beforehand what the preciousness of Christ should be. I do not think that anywhere in the whole range of Scripture we shall find anything more searchingly and amply descriptive of what Christ *is* to the believer. We have here the Gospel according to Isaiah in very deed! But, in order to get at the full meaning of this description of the benefits given by the Lord Jesus, we must note carefully, in the first instance, one striking peculiarity. In all the similes which the prophet piles up here, one after another, as if he were almost oppressed with his own sense of the inexpressible magnitude of what he is attempting to describe, the idea at the foundation of each one of them is *escape from peril or suffering.* The wind shall not be allowed to bring its overwhelming mass of hot deadly sand to suffocate and engulf; there shall be a hiding place from the peril. The quick thunderbolt of the tempest shall not be permitted to strike; there shall be a covert of protection. The desert may be very dreary and painful; but the rivers of water shall be provided before the thirst becomes unbearable. The rays of the sun may strike with their fiercest intensity upon the naked head; but there shall be the great rock in the shadow of which, escape may be found. And it is indeed in this guise that the preciousness of Christ is usually and for the most part presented to the believer. It is when it is most needed that it is most felt. It is in the escape from danger and pain that the power of Christ is most conspicuously manifested.

This is so when the sinner first comes to God, heart-broken, asking forgiveness through the blood of Christ. For the whole world now wears quite a new aspect. Things are no longer happy and easy and smooth. Life is no more a mere course of thoughtless pleasure. God's Holy Spirit has taught the lesson that this earth and all it contains are lying beneath a curse, and that especially the soul of the unrenewed man is lying beneath a curse. And thus the sinner learns that he is under the sentence of God's eternal condemnation. Yea, there is no tempest like the tempest of God's wrath raging round the soul of the sinner convinced of sin, but not convinced of pardon and deliverance from sin. All the terrors of Sinai are these—the thunder and lightning of God's offended law, the raging whirlwind, the consuming fire, the horror of blackness, the sound of the trumpet which at the Last Day shall summon the wicked to a resurrection of woe not less than the righteous to a resurrection of bliss. All is terror and dismay. The heart seeks rest and can find none. The old wonted occupations have lost their charm. The glorious sun in the heavens has ceased to shine. Life has now no relish, no enjoyment, no hope. There seems nothing but to wait for the sentence of God's condemnation to be executed. And, amidst all this, what is it that brings joy back to the struggling, terrified soul? Simply and solely the conviction which God pours into the bruised heart, like balm of sweetest, surest healing, that the blood of Jesus has taken away all sin—that in and through Christ, God is not now an offended, irreconcilable Judge, but an all-loving, tender, compassionate Father. Is not Christ now truly a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest?

In the whole course of the Christian life there is perhaps no season at which the preciousness of Christ is so keenly, so deeply, so exquisitely felt as at this time when the knowledge of the saving efficacy of His blood first brings peace to the sin-laden heart. It is natural that it should be so. The feeling of happiness is so fresh, so new, yet so glorious and real withal, that it fills the whole being with a trance-like power of bliss. Yes, the joy of the new-found Jesus beggars all the joys of life. To know, as a very fact, that the guilt is gone—that Christ has done everything—that the soul is now at one with God—most wonderful of all, that that Being of power and majesty who created this marvellous universe should have condescended to lift a very beggar out of the mire, and strip him of his rags, and put on him the robe of Christ's spotless righteousness—oh, this is the glory of all glories! Then does the heart break forth in rapturous praise to the God who has given the mercy. Then does the whole current of being set in for the time towards a burning desire that the clay prison bars might be broken and the spirit soar to where it might dwell with the beloved Jesus for ever. "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

This cannot last. The sinner is saved from his sins, not to go on in a state of rapturous thanksgiving, not to be taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, but to live out his ordinary life upon earth, to pass through a pilgrim course, always more or less toilsome or perilous, and sometimes beset with affliction and suffering. The people of God in their forty years wandering through the desert—that is ever the type of the progress of the believer upon earth. He may not tarry. He dare not linger. The wide wilderness stretches before and behind and on each side; the way of safety lies straight in front. Nay, though there may seem occasionally to be places of refreshment and ease, he cannot trust them. The desert of this world is a dry thirsty place; but it is better to go on with parched and burning lips than to taste of the natural waters which are presented there. The Christian has found this out, to his bitter cost, in years gone by, when he knew not Christ and was trying to find some other good than God in the world. Ah! these earthly waters are very disappointing. Never can they yield any true refreshment. Oftentimes they cheat the senses, and are found to be no waters at all. To how many, in the path through life, does the lake of pleasure seem to be enough to supply every want, to be likely to furnish never-ceasing draughts, sweet to the taste, satisfying to the senses! Alas! it proves to be a mere mirage of the desert. The stream of self-righteousness looks bright and clear; but its brackish waters will never quench the thirst. The river of self-content, of earthly love, of worldly success, of sloth—these and many others have come in view; but there is not one that will yield a particle of real refreshing. Nay, worse, if they are indulged in without stint, their waters will kill with the deadliest of all poisons—the poison which leads to everlasting destruction. The believer, I say, has found out, sadly enough, the true nature of all these waters. And just in proportion to the intensity of his former disappointment is his sense now of the preciousness of the true, living, blessed waters which are to be found in the Lord Jesus.

"Rivers of water in a dry place!" What an exquisite simile! How suggestive of the fulness and sweetness and richness and power of what the Christian possesses in his Saviour! To realize this at all adequately, we must travel in imagination to Eastern countries, where water is so scarce and so exceedingly valuable. Travellers tell us that wherever in the sandy desert there runs a stream of water—a little wady, no matter how tiny —there the vegetation is sure to spring up in a track of greenness along its banks. But *rivers* of water! How the blessing is magnified! Think of a majestic river, its deep fresh waters flowing noiselessly along, and bringing fertility and gladness and wealth everywhere along its swelling course. And this is what Christ is to the believer. Rivers of water! Nothing less! Rivers of water which ever glide tranquilly on, laden with blessings for his soul.

"The shadow of a great rock in a weary land." In order to get at the full force of this, the last of the group of similes, we must go again to Eastern countries. We all know how delicious it is, even in our own land, to take refuge on a day in midsummer beneath an archway of shady boughs thick enough to shut out the scorching rays of the sun, and there, amidst the shelter of the protecting branches, to listen to the murmuring music of nature outside. But this feeling is increased a hundredfold in those countries where, from the intensity of the heat, labour almost ceases in the middle of the day, and where it is scarcely safe to be abroad in the full blaze of the sunshine. Fancy a traveller in the desert amidst the boundless waste of sand, barrenness and desolation all around, while over head

> "The noonday sun, with fiercest glare,
> Broods o'er the hazy, twinkling air."

How full of joy when, looming afar off, but looming big with comfort and blessing, a great rock appears, beneath the shadow of which he may sit and shelter from the burning, blinding rays of the sun, and get new strength for his journey. This is what Christ is to the believer. Amidst all the fierce, stern pressure of life, which sometimes makes existence seem almost too burdensome to be borne, Christ is as a rock beneath the shadow of which the believer can find rest and shelter and new strength.

Weary with the struggling, the striving, the jarring cares and anxieties, which come hour by hour, the Christian retires out from the world and throws himself at his Saviour's feet, and there, in quiet, calm, holy communion, gets fresh strength to renew the toilsome, grinding work of everyday life.

These are some of the blessings which the believer enjoys in Christ. They are not always present with him. He has to go on many and many a time without any visible or conscious presence of Christ, He cannot always be travelling by refreshing waters, or be reposing under the cool shadow of the mighty rock. Sometimes his own unfaithfulness—his own sins and infirmities—shut out the blessing. Sometimes God, in mercy, Himself takes away the comfort, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Here, upon earth, we must learn to walk by faith, not by sight; and we should never learn to walk by faith if our path always led through pleasant places. Earth is a training place for Heaven; and no training place can be altogether a pleasant or easy place. And even in the present life it not unfrequently happens that the sweetest joy owes its birth to the deepest suffering. We cannot walk by two lights at once. If we have the full blaze of day we do not ask for the shining of the stars; but when night with its pitchy gloom comes, the twinkling radiance from the heavens is very grateful to him who has to find his way through a dangerous country. So the believer, walking in the sunshine of worldly prosperity, is apt to be content with it. But when the darkness of affliction and pain sets in, then the full preciousness of Christ is manifested. The heart learns to cling to Him, and to love Him, and to value Him at His true worth. It learns to know that the truest and surest happiness of life is to rest on the Saviour.

In this way suffering is very bright in its results, if it cause the growth in us of trusting love for Christ. The process is indeed a stern and bitter process. Sometimes the trial is unspeakably terrible. The affliction is so great, so prolonged, so heavy to bear, that the heart seems ready to sink beneath the load. It becomes prostrate and weary and helpless, making no sign, but only appealing to God in mute agony,

O Lord, how lingering
My huge distress!
Only to Thee I bring
The bitterness.

This is what the Christian has sometimes to bear; but then God always gives what strength is necessary to bring him safely through. And let this be a thought of hope for those who are in deep suffering;—every bit of the pain brings us nearer to Christ and makes Him more precious to the soul. More of this world, less of Christ. Less of this world, more of Christ. Which shall it be? Oh, can there be any hesitation, any doubt? Does not every heart which is true to Christ instinctively cry out, "O my God, take all of this world—take friends, prosperity, joy, health, everything—only give me more and more of my Saviour!" But indeed it does need some firm assurance, some strong support, from above, to keep the soul firm and stedfast amidst the trials which sometimes come. God has given; and God does give; and we know that God will give. But the terrible present is, ever and anon, so terrible, that it needs all the giving and all the sense of the giving to help the believer through. Often he has to travel out of sight of the waters, without a single shadow of refuge athwart his bitter path. And a very considerable part of his pilgrim course must needs be spent in this kind of barren and desolate journeying. Worst of all it is when he not only does not see the rock or the river, but he seems as if he hardly could believe that he ever should see them again. Worst of all it is when the believer not only loses sight of the preciousness of Christ, but—so cold and hard and dead does his heart seem—he can hardly believe that Christ *is* precious. For he can bear all things but failing to love Christ; he can endure everything but ceasing to feel His preciousness. Well, this too must be borne in humble, trusting faith. Keep in mind that life is a desert, and nothing else. Part of the horror of the desert is the solitariness, the dread of desertion, the absence of all refreshing and comfort. But God will not leave anyone to perish there, who truly trusts in Him. Let no terrors, then, real or imaginary, drive the soul to despair. The way may stretch with seeming endlessness in front. It may seem as though the sore and blistered feet cannot move much further. The hard lines of the tawny, level plain may reach forward in all their grim blankness of monotony, without a single cooling stream at which to quench the thirst, without a single tree to give rest and protection from the glaring sun. It may be that, in every direction, all the way even to that dim spot where the dull flatness of the sands merges imperceptibly into the cloudy horizon,—it may be that, far off or near, the eye can perceive no shelter, no refuge, no promise of hope. Be it so. Here faith must come and furnish still strength to go on. Believe it, beyond all that dreaded waste of desert earth there is a home of eternal rest where Jesus shall be found in all His preciousness. As day by day the pilgrim feet press over that sandy, shadowless, tear-bedewed but also prayer-hallowed path,—every day, nay, every hour, that home becomes nearer. And, oh! the joy when it is reached—when the wide weary desert has been traversed to its last inch, and the bliss of heaven is a thousand-fold more blissful for the toilsomeness and pain which have been endured. There in that final home of homes, amidst numberless blessings, one of the chiefest of all shall be to feel and know fully, as we cannot feel and know here, the infinite preciousness of Christ. There the Saviour shall be as rivers of water, ever flowing in sweetest freshness, on whose banks dwell unceasing rest and peace—as an abiding rock from whose cool soft shade there shall be no more going out. There—all the pains and perils of the desert journey over—the believer shall spend an eternity of joy, basking in his Saviour's love, learning ever some new and precious bliss at the dear feet of Him whose blood has purchased the blessed inheritance.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 34.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT

REV. LORD BISHOP OF EXETER,

(FRANCIS TEMPLE, D.D.)

PREACHED UNDER THE DOME OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL,
LONDON,

ON WEDNESDAY, JULY 3RD, 1872,

ON BEHALF OF THE

SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL
IN FOREIGN PARTS.

[This being the occasion of the presentation of a Silver Alms-Basin, from the American Episcopal Church to the Church of England; there were present, the Bishop of Ohio, and the Rev. Dr. Hall, Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Brooklyn, New York, (representing the American Church); the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Bishops of London, Winchester, Oxford, Lichfield, Ely, Chichester, Rochester, Lincoln, Llandaff, Gloucester, Carlisle, Bath and Wells, Salisbury, Hereford, and St. Asaph's; and the Deans of Westminster and St. Paul's.]

"*For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?*"—Romans xi, 15.

These words express the hope entertained by St. Paul of the ultimate solution of what was, in his eyes, a strange and mysterious puzzle—the refusal of the Jews to enter the Church of Christ. The Apostle more perhaps than any other writer in the New Testament, always shows himself deeply impressed with the lessons of experience. To his own experience of conversion he turns when he would explain the character and process of the great change whereby the Christian passes from death to life. To experience he appeals when he would convince his readers that the law could not give a man the righteousness required by God, and that to live under the law had not made, and could not make men God's children. To experience he appeals when he would prove his Apostleship, urging that his own success was a seal of his mission, and that if he were not an Apostle to others, he was, at any rate, an Apostle to those whom he had converted. That God had intended to bring the Gentiles to the kingdom of His Son, was plain to him from many reasons, but, above all, from this patent fact that thousands upon thousands of the Gentiles had already come in and there seemed no apparent limit to the spread of the truth among them, or to its power over their souls and lives. And yet there stood before him one unquestioned fact which seemed to run counter to all this argument and even to turn it against himself. For it was undeniable that while the Gospel was daily making fresh conquests among the Gentiles, God's chosen people were standing outside, and after centuries of possession were surrendering to others their birthright. It had not been always so. When the Gospel was preached after the day of Pentecost the Jews had been brought in by thousands at a time. The trammels of the system in which they had been educated, had not prevented a great company of priests from being converted to the faith. Believers were added to the Lord daily; multitudes both of men and women. "They ate their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favour with all the people." All this was changed, and the date of the change is the preaching of St. Stephen, St Paul's precursor. From the day that the first hint was given that the Gospel of Christ was something larger than the Law of Moses, from the day that it was first taught that the Gentiles would be put on a level with the Jews, all this favour and welcome began to pass away, and the Jews became the bitterest persecutors of those whom at first they had magnified with enthusiastic acceptance. It was the teaching of St. Paul and of St. Paul's especial doctrine that had cast them out. It was his own special work that had done the mischief. That very success which when he looked at the Gentiles encouraged him in the midst of difficulty, was marred in a capital point. Nay, it might be said that his success was no success at all, for he had purchased the admission of the Gentiles by the exclusion of the Jews. It was not only a mystery, it was inexpressibly painful to contemplate —how painful to the Apostle we can see by the passionate exclamation quite unparalleled in the Bible, with which he begins his examination of the strange fact. He even declares that he would wish to give up his own salvation if thereby he could bring in his countrymen, for whom his very heart yearns; for whom he suffers continual sorrow. But strange and mysterious as the fact was he could not deny it, nor explain it away. The *chosen people* stayed outside; the Gentiles found the way in, but *they* missed it. This had been foreshadowed indeed in their own law and their own prophets. It was not difficult to point precisely to the mistake which had misled them. There were some among them, a remnant like the seven thousand worshippers of Jehovah, in the days of Elijah, who had embraced the Cross; but after all this was said, it still remained very strange that the people who had received the gift and the favour of God, should be cast away. It is when he has come to this point that the Apostle gives his own solution of the puzzle in the eleventh verse of the eleventh chapter, which stands a little before the text that I have chosen. "I say then, Have they stumbled that they should fall? God forbid: but rather through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy. Now if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles; how much more their fulness?"

It is to the principle contained in those words and the application of that principle to the work undertaken by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel that I wish to ask your attention this morning. And the principle, as I understand it, is this—that on the one hand in all such Divine work the hindrances, the obstacles, the perils, the delays are all of them parts of the very process by which the work is done. And on the other hand the final success of the work, nay, every measure of such success, will bring with it a Divine crown of blessing sufficient to prove that the work is God's. The rejection of the Jews for a time was needed for the good of the Church, for the progress of the Gospel, for the interests of the truth. The Apostle does not develop his own thought; but we, when we look back on this wonderful history, may well ask ourselves whether we cannot see more than one advantage which the Catholic Church has gained by the rejection of the Jews. Would it have been possible to give to the Church its spiritual and catholic character, if at the very beginning there had been established at its centre a mass of believers in the old traditions, imbued with the preciseness, the formalism, the peculiar superstitions of the pharisaical teaching? Would it have been possible to bring in the Gentiles at all if they had had to face the unwillingness of the prior converts to admit them on equal terms, if, although the Apostles preached that circumcision was needless, the great mass of Christians felt and showed that they felt that circumcision was better than uncircumcision? Would the spirit of the Mosaic Law have superseded its letter, if the great body of the faithful, with all the preponderance which priority gives had still maintained the letter in their own lives and in their relations with their new brethren? It does not seem a far-fetched inference to say that the spirituality and catholicity of the Church were preserved by that exclusion of the Jews which wrung St. Paul's heart. Their rejection was necessary for our admission. But when the day of their redemption has come and gone—whether that redemption be by a slow process of absorption, as seems most probable, or by one of those sudden national movements of which history is not without examples, that day, saith St. Paul, shall be "Like life from the dead." No figure short of this can he use to describe the gain which the Church would win if the chosen people of yore were once more bodily within the fold. To have once more the deep religiousness, the extraordinary sense of God's nearness and power, the recognition of God's hand in all that happens; to have these special gifts of the old Hebrew race once more living and prevailing in the Church of Christ what would it be but "life from the dead?"

Now it is never possible to compare the future which we do not know at all, nor the present which we only half know with the past which we read by the light of its own consequences. When we look at the work which the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel is doing, is there not a parallel to be seen between the fact that is before our eyes and that which once startled St. Paul. We too have before us the wonderful fact, that our Lord died for all mankind and yet His Gospel is still unknown, now, more than eighteen hundred years after his death, to the great majority of the human race? Is it not strange that so many millions should be still outside? Is it not strange that the merchant should have been allowed to anticipate the missionary and the exploring adventurer should have gone to satisfy his curiosity where the Gospel of God hath not yet gone to save the souls of men? Is it not strange that the harvest should be so exceedingly plenteous, and the labourers so exceedingly few? If it almost staggered St. Paul to see the Jews excluded, how much more should it stagger us to see, so to speak, the whole of mankind excluded? When we reflect that for all these millions the Lord of Glory died, how can we explain the mystery that He has not completed His own work but has left them out till now. Should we not have expected that man would have discovered the surface of the earth in the endeavour to make known the Cross, not that we should be called to preach the Cross by having first discovered the surface of the earth? Does not the state of the world seem to give weight to the argument that the Gospel, after all, is not so catholic as humanity? Does it not belie the argument which is founded on the success of the truth? It is so, brethren, and we can no more deny that this is a strange and almost inexplicable puzzle, than could St. Paul deny the same of the rejection of the Jews. Can we give any solution of it all? We cannot pretend to do more than look at the facts that we see, and learn what lesson we can from those facts. And we see that it has pleased God to marry the light of heavenly truth to the light of earthly truth, and to give the possession of the one where He has given possession of the other. In the Christian nations beyond all others flourish the sciences which study God's works side by side with the science which studies God's word. To the Christians hath God given the supremacy in the arts of life, in the machinery of government, in the cultivation of literature. To the Christian, above all others, has it pleased Him to give the wealth and the power which belong to this present world—fearful snares if we use them ill, and precious talents if we use them well. Can this be without a purpose? He who believes not in God's government of the world may find here no more than a coincidence; but the student of the ways of Providence feels sure that there must be some deep-founded reason why the Gospel should be kept within its hitherto narrow limits while it was gradually conquering the intellect of the more cultivated races, penetrating ever deeper and deeper with a strange and subtle insinuation into all law and all art, and all government, and all literature. Whatever may be said of the opposition between science and religion, there stands the plain fact that the scientific nations are the Christian nations, and that when the people of God go forth to preach the long delayed message to the world they find nowhere among the people whom they visit their equals in secular knowledge, or in all that flows from the possession of that knowledge. And can we deny that the message that we give is simpler and purer and the more effective on this ground ? Is it not a great gain that before going to preach to others we should have outgrown many superstitions and many mistakes ourselves. Has not the progress of knowledge which is assuredly God's gift, made our interpretation of the Bible and our use of the Bible simpler and clearer and more spiritual. If we had but the zeal of the mediæval missionaries, have we not the means of doing far more than they could do ? It seems as if God had ordained that the perpetual study of His works should always re-act on the study of His word ; and as if all light should be made the handmaid of religion ; and as if He had kept us back from going to the nations of the world until we had learnt our own lessons with more accuracy and clearness. Imagine the cases reversed ! Imagine the Gospel preached to us from people in a lower state of culture ! Imagine the less cultivated Christian nations endeavouring to teach the more cultivated ! Could we receive the Gospel at their hands ? Could we learn the truth from men who brought it wrapped up in foolish and silly superstitions ? Would it be possible, for instance, that Europe, as Europe now is, should receive the Gospel from Abyssinia as Abyssinia now is ?—Yes, even if they had the very truth itself, but that truth mixed and marred with demonstrable falsehoods,—could that truth be welcomed by our understanding if so presented to us for the first time ?

And now, brethren, I do not say for one moment that this is the whole account of the matter, but what I insist upon is that whenever we are disposed to be daunted by watching the slow progress of the Gospel, the answer is that such delays are to be looked on simply as parts of the process of God, and in this particular instance it may well be that it was His pleasure to require His church to begin the conquest over the intellect of men, and over the products of that intellect, before going forth to conquer the human race itself. But, of course, if this be true as far as it goes, I must add it is yet but a portion of the truth. There may be other reasons which we cannot see, but which posterity will see, and they may learn in fuller measure than we can learn that the casting away until now of the great peoples of Asia and Africa are the riches of the Church, and the diminishing of *them* the riches of mankind.

That there is a purpose in delays and obstacles is one half of the principle that St. Paul asserts, and the other half is the gain that accompanies every success: and as the one is a consolation when we are discouraged, so is the other a perpetual encouragement when we are labouring. Nothing is more sure than the re-action of all extension of the truth of God. The very endeavour to give the heavenly message to others engraves that message more deeply on our own hearts. The very condition of vigorous, spiritual health at home is the attempt to kindle that life abroad. We may not be able to trace the immediate results of every fresh conquest; we may not be able to reap as we are sowing; but the harvest of God is sure if it be slow, and what the Church sows that shall it also reap.

This day we received in this Cathedral an offering of affection sent by the Church of America to the Church of England. Long shall we prize this token of their communion with us, and hand it down to our successors to be treasured for the sake of the givers. It is more to us than a present. It speaks to us of the blessing of God on the labours of our fathers. It tells us of the warm affection that will assuredly follow on all our extensions of the knowledge of the Gospel. It tells us that our own spiritual life shall be richer by the life that we communicate. Let us look forward, as St. Paul did, to the end. Let us picture to ourselves what it will be to the Church of Christ when the nations of the world shall at last come in, and the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. Let us imagine the whole earth at last become Christian. Will it not give an indescribable strength and power to the religious life of mankind that all men should profess one religion. Assuredly the inevitable result of such an end of our labours would be the moral and spiritual standard of mankind would shoot upwards to a marvellous height. I am not supposing—I know not that we have any right to anticipate, that all men shall be Christians in deed, as well as Christians in profession—I know not that we have any warrant for hoping that as the Church shall spread till it covers the world, so carelessness of life, and lack of faith, and the profligacy of the wicked and the impiety of the reckless shall disappear; but suppose only that all mankind profess the Gospel in the same sense in which the nations of Europe profess it now, what figure could we use to describe the consequences, but that which St. Paul uses in the parallel instance, "What shall the receiving of them be but life from the dead?" Assuredly when that day comes it shall be almost like a renewal of the spring of life; like a return to the strength and zeal of Apostolic times, to find all men everywhere acknowledging the Cross; to find no other religion professed on any shore but the religion of the Lord; to find the whole human race united in one grand confession. How certain will that be to make the Gospel broader and deeper. How surely will the living and essential rise above the mechanical and the accidental. How petty national prejudices and narrow blindnesses will disappear before the one universal voice. What strength will be given to faith; what calmness, what keenness of discrimination, what intercourse of spiritual affection, what communion of spiritual life, may be expected to grow up out of the one profession of faith. And then shall every church own its debt of gratitude to every other, and each shall learn lessons of the other in the day when all nations shall confess the one Lord. It is far off yet. God works slowly, and that very slowness is but another proof that the work is His. At first sight it often seems that the most convincing proof of the presence of His hand is when He does the work of a thousand years in one day, but a deeper reflection makes us know that a much surer proof of His presence is when the purpose of His will, which man would limit by his own brief day, is steadily pursued through a thousand years. We may imitate in some degree the *sudden*, but the *slow* is utterly beyond our power. We can command many things, but centuries of persistent action we cannot command. Our steadily growing science may give us, by God's guidance, increased dominion over the creation in which it has pleased Him to make us lords, but no science will enable us to bind the generations to come, or ensure that others will pursue our objects when we ourselves are not. To God alone must we commit the work which transcends all duration that we can command. It is slow, but all the more it is *His;* and yet we may ever encourage ourselves as we labour in the task with the thought that the conversion of the nations shall be nothing short of "life from the dead."

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. DEAN OF YORK,

(HON. & REV. AUGUSTUS DUNCOMBE, D.D.)

PREACHED AT THE CHAPEL ROYAL, SAVOY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 1872.

"*But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.*"—2 Thessalonians ii, 13.

If it be that man is no longer what he was originally made; if he inherit no longer that nature which the Creator breathed into him when he became a living soul; if he be alienated from the love of God through the ignorance that is in him; and if in order to be reconciled he requires another nature, which in all essentials shall be the very contrary of that he now has, we shall probably ask how is this to be effected? Can man bring it about of himself? Can he recover his original nature by his own unaided effort? Can he cast out sin from the throne of its dominion and regain fellowship with God?

These are questions that we may at all times profitably consider, and more especially at this Trinity time, which to us is one of the most important seasons in the Christian year. Looking at the seasons celebrated by the Church, we commence with the celebration of the Nativity when our heavenly Father sent

His Son into the world to be our Saviour; next the many and important events of the Easter season when the Son of Man achieved His victory over the grave by the resurrection from the dead, thirdly, when having appeared before His disciples and being in the act of blessing His disciples at Bethany, He was parted from them and taken up to heaven, next we have recently celebrated Whit Sunday when the Holy Ghost descended upon the disciples at Jerusalem; and now we enter upon the Trinity-tide season, and what is called the practical season of the Christian year. Shortly before His Ascension our blessed Lord said "Now I go My way to Him that sent Me and none of you asketh Me, whither goest Thou? But because I have said these things unto you sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send Him unto you."

We may picture to ourselves the occasion upon which these words were spoken, and, I think, realize this gathering together of our Lord and His disciples. We can surely see the group. There was our Lord as usual the one central figure. He felt how they all leaned upon Him. He knew how unprepared they were for the coming trial and He spoke to them in tones of more than ordinary earnestness. There was St. John the disciple who loved Him, pressing closer and leaning upon His breast. There was St. Peter with his impetuousness, alternately betraying weakness and exhibiting strength. There was St. Thomas, ready to doubt and to question, and irresolutely dwelling upon His every word; and although they were there regarding Him as one upon whom they had been taught to lean for all things, yet He says "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you but if I depart I will send Him unto you."

Why then was it necessary that our blessed Lord should go away before the Comforter should come? One reason at least seems to suggest itself, which is this. It was only by His leaving them that the souls of the disciples could be delivered from that strong earthly affection for their Lord, which made it impossible to welcome that Spiritual Presence, which should be really richer in blessings than His bodily and visible presence. It was as if He had said to them "Unless I withdraw from you My body, I cannot shew you the love of the Spirit; unless you cease to behold Me in the body, you will never learn to love Me spiritually."

Now what those disciples were to realize in a spiritual sense, is equally incumbent upon all the disciples to realize to the end of time. We are to look for the sacred influences of the Holy Ghost, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, dwelling not in bodily presence but in the heart of each, as a vital truth, as a Divine reality, as a practical and renovating experience of the Christian life; the indwelling of the Spirit, a permanent abiding within of a Divine principle, is the token of our regeneration, the seed of eternal life. It is the means of uniting us to Christ, of enabling us to apply to ourselves those exceeding great and precious promises whereby we are made partakers of the Divine nature (and we all stand in great need of it). A pure and spiritual witness is that by means of which God speaks to us, remonstrates with us, tells us His thoughts. It is by this we are strengthened in the inner man, that Christ dwells in our hearts by faith. Without this Divine influence we can never realize the wondrous things of God. Neither the inspirations of genius, nor the development of intellect, neither efforts after a lofty morality nor mere abstract truths, of revelation will impress upon us that which man is most concerned to know. It is indeed to be feared that many have gone out into the world's busy scenes and chosen their lot in life, well-instructed in Scripture and well-warned against all life's perils, well conversant with

Scripture's high and holy verities, who have yet in after years discovered that their learning has been imperfect, that they have read as scholars and not as disciples, in fact that they have had almost to begin again. Their Bible has been to them but a school-book, and not the Bible either for the heart in its needs or for the soul under its burdens. A saving knowledge of the Bible can only be spiritually acquired. The law of the Lord is an undefiled law, converting the soul, the testimony of the Lord is sure and giveth wisdom to the simple.

It is sometimes said that man of himself is not able to repent, not able to turn, not able to believe and obey. In a certain sense this is perfectly true, but this inability is to be spoken of not in a physical or mechanical sense, but in a moral and a moral only. It is not so much man's weakness that keeps him back, as man's wilfulness. There is no man, be his position what it may, who has not the power to come to Christ if he have the disposition. "Ye will not come to Me," says our Lord, "that ye may have life." God gives no man any new physical power but He does give to every man who will ask it, the inclination and the willingness. He does nothing which is not in accordance with the principles of man's nature. He leaves his powers unfettered and his resources open. He gives him the free use of his intelligence, his power of thought and his reason. He compels no man to walk after Him. He does not drive but He leads by His blessed Spirit. The standard of our duty and the source of our strength, the measure of our obligations and the recognition of our responsibilities find their counterpart in that sentence of the Apostle's. "Work out your own salvation, with fear and trembling for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Such my brethren is the work of the Holy Spirit; it is the love of God in the soul of man. It is Christ dwelling within us; wrestling for us; working for us. It is an appeal to us whether we feel sincerely, practically and experimentally the infinite evil of sin and the mighty claims of eternity, and above all whether we acknowledge the need of a new heart to serve God here and a new nature to fit our souls for heaven hereafter. "Know ye not," asks the Apostle, "that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have from God and ye are not your own?" Do any of you enquire how this can be, seeing that sin prevails though grace abounds, you will find that in the very lowest stages of the Christian life, God has not left Himself without witness. Amongst those who are simply what they were by nature, there will be some who have a certain amount of spiritual knowledge. They well know when they have been speaking profanely, when they have been tempted to prevaricate or speak falsely, when they have indulged in feelings of unkindness or sinful thoughts, or gone on living without prayer. They know that in these things they have done wrong; they have felt themselves reproached from within that they were resisting the Spirit of God who was seeking to make them a fit habitation for Himself and to call them to a better life.

Oh, surely then if there does dwell within us the person of God the Holy Ghost; if we are indeed partakers of the glorified humanity of our ascended Lord, our state is one of the most blessed; but at the same time it is one of the most perilous. For what will be the consequence of refusing this Divine gift, or of receiving it in vain? What a condition of iniquity would such a state imply? What will be the result of encouraging unbelieving thoughts? What will be the end of that mere indifference, upon which to make an impression seems all but hopeless? What will be the reward of self-indulgence, of peevishness, waste of time, and waste of money, of looseness of speech, wanderings in thought and principle, carelessness about the soul and the like? What will all these be to those who refuse to see that on them the Holy Spirit has descended, that their bodies were made to be Temples of the Holy Ghost.

Oh, my brethren, be warned and profit by the principles which you have been taught. God has chosen you for salvation not by any arbitrary process of selecting some and rejecting others, but solely through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth. That truth is in Christ Jesus. He came, not merely to shew us the way to the Father; not merely as our Divine and accredited Teacher; He is Himself the Way, and He is Himself the Truth. There can be no such thing as Christianity without Christ. Throughout the Gospel narrative we see one living, moving, all-pervading Presence. We see faith, and love, and veneration, and trust, cluster and crystallize round the one Divine Teacher; and we see Him, the Teacher of Nazareth, the Christ God, towering loftily above all as the one central figure. Our Church is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth, and as such she raises on high the Author of Truth, Christ Himself. She teaches, preaches, and extols the great mystery of Godliness, God manifest in the flesh; the Invisible God made visible to man by taking flesh. God was manifested in the flesh, justified by the Spirit, was seen of angels and men when He preached to the Gentiles, was believed by the world and was received up into glory. To the Church has been committed the oracles of God and she is a faithful witness the same. She sets them forth in her Catholic creeds, in her ancient liturgies, and in the solemn ritual which has from time immemorial accompanied her Eucharistic Services, Realize then, my brethren, your position and remember your responsibilities. Whether you are engaged in easy and peaceful pursuits, or whether you are called to more arduous duties, whether you are living in quiet and independent circumstances, or whether you have been summoned to take part in the busy scenes of this busy centre of activity, remember, oh! remember, that Christ is your head, your life, your truth; that you have to sustain the honour of His religion and of the Church of which you are members; that you are to maintain its doctrines in their integrity and purity; and that you are to let your example shine before your fellow-creatures. Do this, and then when Jesus Christ our Great Chief, the Captain of our salvation, shall again come to unite in closer union his faithful members; when there shall be neither foe to resist, nor harm to fear; when all our other weapons shall have been cast aside for the sword of the Spirit; when deeds of darkness shall have been eclipsed by the brightness of eternity, then, through the merits of Him in whom all blessings concentrate, we shall rejoice in the possession of that incorruptible crown of glory which the Righteous Judge has promised to all who continue faithful servants unto their lives' end.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

[No. 35.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. JOHN LLEWELLYN DAVIES, M.A.,

Rector of Christ Church, Marylebone,

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 1872.

"*With one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.*"—Philippians i, 27.

We happen to be hearing a good deal just now about sectarian and unsectarian teaching. The terms have become familiar to us through the controversy which has prevailed for some time, and which threatens to be prolonged, about the public policy in the matter of education. There are those who strenuously urge that all sectarian teaching should be excluded from the public elementary schools, and should be left to the voluntary action of the religious bodies; and that in order to secure the perfectly unsectarian character of the common school instruction, it should be made absolutely secular. Their fear is that injustice may be done to one sect by the doctrine of another sect being taught at the public cost. They divide the teaching which it is desirable that children should receive, into the two classes of sectarian and secular and they wish the two to be kept strictly apart. Let the nation, say they, instruct all its children in the knowledge that belongs only to this world; and let the sects instruct as many as they can respectively draw to them, in their peculiar opinions as to the next world.

Most of us, I think it probable, are agreed in thinking that to exclude all acknowledgment of God from the education to be publicly given to the children of the poor would be to do them an injury which we are not compelled by any imperious necessity to inflict upon them. We think that so vast a majority of the people of this country are of one mind in reverencing the Bible and in accepting those Christian statements which would naturally be used in the teaching of children, that we may reasonably decide that elementary religious instruction should be offered in the public schools to all those whose parents wish them to receive it. We are not in favour therefore of the public instruction being made exclusively secular. But I wish to speak to-night with reference to the other part which is to make up the proposed educational whole; I mean the inculcating by the sects of their peculiar doctrines. If it would be a bad thing that general education should be made secular it would probably be a far worse thing for this country that religious teaching should become more expressly and avowedly sectarian. Let me ask your earnest attention to the danger threatening us in this assumption, that religion must be sectarian. Let me plead that the true teaching concerning God and the other world, not only will not let itself be divided from secular things—not only should seek to be unsectarian, but that with its whole consciousness, and aim, and force it is *anti*-sectarian.

We of the Church of England should of course repudiate the name of a sect. Let us do so with the utmost earnestness, so long as we keep in mind the responsibility which such repudiation involves.

But let us not imagine that we are in no danger of making ourselves a sect; that we are in any way preserved by our name from the intrusion of the sectarian principle and sentiment. It is the nature of a sect to divide itself off from the rest of the world. Its characteristic is *exclusiveness.* It begins when persons say to themselves and to one another—"We prefer certain opinions, or practices, or names; we will associate others with us on condition of their agreeing with us; we can then form a School, a Party, a Church, distinguished by what we hold or practise." This way of thinking may take possession of the minds of any who find themselves associated together. It is possible for members of the Church of England to think of their church as a body separated from mankind in general by a preference for certain religious views and habits. Churchmen may then be exclusive, or proselytizing. They may either indulge in the pleasure of keeping other men at a distance, or they may be zealously eager to win adherents to their opinions, and to increase the power of their body; or they may combine both dispositions in one. They will have done what in them lies to make their Church a sect.

And this tendency is so natural to us that we can hardly help falling into it, although all the great principles of our Church—although its Catholicity and its Nationality—bear united witness against it. When we find persons who profess to be favourable to religion, complacently advocating the sectarian inculcation of religious dogmas within the range of each religious body, it is a warning to us to take alarm and to resolve to be watchful, not against the trivial possibility of some of our money getting employed in the teaching of doctrines which we do not hold, but against perverted notions of the proper meaning of the Christian vocation, against the corruption of the very heart of our religion. *I repeat, it would be a worse evil that the Christianity of England should itself be deeply injured, than that some poor children should be left without any Christian teaching at all.* It is of not less importance, perhaps, to be anxious about the *quality* of religion, than about its *quantity*.

I admit that, to one who looks at our Christianity from the outside, its most obvious aspect is that of a number of competing bodies, each having its own doctrines or dogmas; each desirous of propagating its special opinions; each seeking aggrandizement at the expense of the rest. It would be idle to complain of such an account being given of religion in this country by an independent observer. But the more natural and inevitable the sectarian conception may be, the more necessary it is for those who would be true Christians and loyal Churchmen to fortify themselves against it, by distinctly realizing to themselves the anti-sectarian character and purpose of their calling. Whatever excuse there may be for describing the Church of England as a sect, let us who belong to it determine that to us it shall be the very opposite of a sect.

There is no term, perhaps, which would be more generally accepted as describing the recognized function of the Church than this, the ministration of the Word and Sacraments. Let me briefly unfold the meaning of this phrase in order to illustrate the principle for which I am contending. It is the office of the Church to preach or to publish the Word of God. This Word of God is the gospel of forgiveness; the announcement of reconciliation. The Church is the bearer of this message, charged to declare to all men that in Christ God was reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.

No Christian can doubt that as long as there are men in the world who have not received the Gospel, it is the business of the Church to make known to them God's forgiveness of sins. The declaration is to be made to all men, not to certain congenial persons, not upon certain terms, but simply and unconditionally to men as men. That could not be questioned. There may be some danger, however, of its being supposed that this ministration of the word is for the benefit of those who are not yet Christians, and ceases to be needed by those who are already in the Church. But you know well, my brethren, how impossible it is for us to advance beyond the want of this ministration. As long as our sins remain, we need to be reminded of God's displeasure against sin ; of the reconciliation which He grants to the sinner. The word of the Gospel can never grow obsolete for us, and to declare it to all men alike, to Christians and Heathen, to Churchmen and non-Churchmen, must continue to be a main function of the Church.

What is there in the ministration of God's Word to suggest the idea of a competing sect ? Is not this function of the Church distinctly anti-sectarian ? Does it not aim at the removal of the causes of those divisions by which men are hindered from being at one ? The Gospel which calls to reconciliation with God, equally bids men be reconciled to one another. Conceive, if you can, of Christians thoroughly possessed by the word of reconciliation, setting themselves, in a sectarian mood, to build up fences between their own religious body and the rest of the world ! How can this be the mind of followers of Him whose glory it was to break down the wall of partition which separated the most deeply divided sections of mankind ?

But the Sacraments are to be ministered by the Church, as well as the Word ; and if the Word is free and not exclusive, the Sacraments, it might be plausible to urge, are the very marks of separation. First, it may be said, there is a distinction made by Baptism between Christians and non-Christians ; and then there is a second made by the Lord's Supper between those who are in earnest and those who are but worldly professors. Is this, let me ask, the essential idea and intended use of the Sacraments ? Were they ordained for the sake of creating a larger and an inner circle of believers ?

Baptism is very closely related to the Word. "Go and teach all nations," said our Lord, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." They that gladly received the Word were baptized. The act was one of deep but simple significance. The Word declared to men the forgiveness of the Father in heaven, manifested in His Son Jesus Christ; the washing with water cleansed the repenting sinner from his defilement and claimed him as a member of God's family, an inmate of God's. home. What, in truth was baptism, but the grace of the Word put into Act?

You may have wondered, perhaps, at the way in which one of the briefer clauses in the Apostles' Creed is varied in the Nicene. In the former we say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." In the corresponding place of the Nicene Creed we say, "I believe in one Baptism for the remission of sins." It was the same thought—that of the forgiveness, or reconciliation, brought home to men through the Cross of Christ—that was in the minds of the framers of this clause. But to them the one universal Baptism of the Church was the obvious and assuring witness of the reconciliation. They believed in the remission of sins and in the sacramental right that was ordained to be the perpetual token and organ of it. It is unfortunate for us if difficulties and controversies about Baptism have obscured to us its primary significance. If we look at it in its simplicity, seeing Christ's Church and Minister offering and washing with water freely in God's name, in order that the person thus cleansed may no longer be separated by consciousness of defilement and unworthiness from the heavenly Father and His family, we shall think it strange and sad that it should be turned into an argument for limiting God's favour; into a stone of stumbling; into a terrible sentence of Divine wrath and rejection; into a sectarian badge. I am not seeking to empty this Sacrament of divine meaning and authority. Let us by all means hear God Himself speaking through it. For assuredly the message with which He has made it vocal is this, "I seek all men and would have them at peace with Me, as My reconciled children. I know they are sinners; but see, I make each one clean, let him come to Me without fear, in the spirit not of bondage but of Son-ship."

We are pledged then by the one Baptism of the Church, Catholic, to believe in a unity which puts all sectarian exclusiveness to shame. But what is the teaching of the other Sacrament? Does not that encourage us to separate ourselves? Here again I have to ask you instead of fixing your attention upon circumstances or conditions which may characterize the actual partaking of the Lord's Supper in our own Church or elsewhere, to look at the Ordinance in its essential, divinely-intended, idea. This is what ought to rule us in our interpretation of it.

The Lord's Supper is the typical form of Christian Communion or fellowship. In that Sacrament believers in Christ meet together, not because they like and choose one another's society; not in order that they may promote views in which they may happen to agree; but on the common ground of being Christians, that together they may feed on Christ; that they may submit to His one spirit; that they may offer themselves thankfully to God in His mind of sacrifice. If any act can be imagined which proposes to take men out of themselves, to substitute for their own personal preferences and opinions a deeper and more universal ground of union, that act is surely the joining together in the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. Christians *may* come together for the sake of exhibiting a select society of persons holding the same views, but this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. Unless they resolve by the help of God to forget the differences which keep them apart from other men, and to claim only the gifts which are offered freely alike to all men in Christ; and to confess the bond of union which binds man to man in Christ, to be stronger and more sacred than any bonds which unite special bodies or classes together, they do not truly discern the Lord's Body. It is only natural that the sense of awe generated by closeness to such mysteries as the sacrifice of Christ and the union of His members in Him, should have kept back from the Holy Communion mere lovers of pleasure, and should have caused the intrusion of openly profane persons to be felt as a desecration. One can understand how communicants have come to be in general a somewhat select class. But in the New Testament there is no hint of the communicants being any but the whole Christian society. The Lord's Supper is very rarely mentioned in the Epistles. Where the references to it occur, we are told of communicants who joined also in the sacrificial feasts of false gods; and of communicants who ate and drank rudely; and solemn warnings and appeals are addressed to those who show so little understanding of the meaning of the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ; but no intimation is given that the Church ought to have repelled even such members from the Communion. It was assumed in those days that every one who was acknowledged as a fellow Christian would, as a matter of course, join in a common and united dependence on Christ. All the original associations of the Lord's Supper therefore speak of a unity not created by chance agreement, or by any sort of agreement in feeling or opinion, but existing independently of individual tastes and experiences, and to be realized through the voluntary submission of individuals to the one Lord and Saviour of all men. However widely it may have extended itself, the theory of the communicants being a sifted and select body, whether through the voluntary absence of those who think themselves unworthy, or through the repulsion of those who are thought unworthy by the administrators of the Church, seems to be out of harmony with primitive custom, and to confuse the spiritual influence of the Sacrament. But even a few communicants may, by God's help (if they think of the Lord's Body, and not of their own or their neighbours qualifications), drink in the anti-sectarian spirit of the Holy Communion, and appeal both inwardly and openly to the law of universal human fellowship laid down by it, and strive to the utmost of their power to assume and act upon that law. They are not the true children of the Sacrament who call none but the actual partakers with them of the sacred bread and wine their brethren; but rather those who have so fed on Christ that—as to Him so to them—all partakers of human flesh and blood are joined in the bonds of a divine brotherhood. Am I not right in contending that the truer we are to the essential principles involved in the ministration of the Word and the Sacraments, the more it will be impossible for us to acquiesce in the sectarian conception of religion, or to accept for ourselves the sectarian position? I can imagine, however, an impatient thought passing through some minds to the following effect, "After all, the fact is that there are in England and throughout Christendom, a number of religious bodies which are in relations of rivalry and competition. These bodies are distinguished from one another by their respective creeds and practices. Men stay in those in which they may find themselves, or go over from one to another, because they prefer a particular creed, or ritual, or mode of government. It is fanciful to insist on the anti-sectarian character of original principles; such doctrine may be only a disguise for high-flown pretensions, which would deepen instead of removing divisions. The best wisdom is to cultivate charity and tolerance, and, where good men differ, not to hold one's own convictions too tightly. Is it enough for us, in the present condition of Christianity, if we can be *un*sectarian."

No, brethren, let us not despair of something more than this. I admit that churches and sects must have their organizations; that it would be unwise as well as chimerical to preach to the religious bodies of Chistendom that they should agree to give up everything by which they differ from one another, although I do not doubt that if the mind of the Gospel prevailed with more power, it would lead to the giving up of stumbling blocks which have been clung to chiefly for the sake of distinction. But within our Church as it is (and I am here appealing to its members,) it is both possible and most important to aim at something more than a tolerant temper; to try by living in what is original and Divine in our creed, whether we cannot attain to an attitude and purpose and hope which shall be nobly and Christianly *intolerant* of divisions. Look at what the Church was in the days of the Apostles. You see little enough of the "let-alone" principle there. You observe order being developed and enforced; true principles tenaciously maintained; aggression and defence going on with little regard to personal comfort. No doubt there were faults in the Christians of those days, faults in even a St. Paul, a St. Peter, a St. John. But who will say that it was a fault in those heralds and ambassadors of Christ to believe too earnestly that God was seeking to bring all men to unity through reconciliation? They held that they were commissioned to proclaim a Gospel, and to establish a fellowship through which the wars and fightings, the jealousy and blindness, of Jews, and Greeks, and Romans, of the Church and of the world, might be healed. If we were to try our hands at mending the Church of the New Testament, is *that* the conviction which we should reprehend as inordinate or fanciful? Is any one so foolish as to suppose that Christianity could have existed at all without that passion for conquest in the cause of unity? Looking, as we cannot do too often, at that rock from whence we were hewn, must we not admit that we should be consistent followers of the Apostles if we regarded all that we have and that we are in the Church as God's means for declaring His eternal love towards men, and for bringing them into the unity of believing in the Son, and of knowing the Father through Him?

There is another feeling which may stand in the way of that conception of our Christian calling for which I am contending—the fear of losing distinctive theology in a vague religious sentiment. This fear prompts men to stand forth as champions of Denominationalism; to insist upon safeguards, barriers, and definitions; to demand that the peculiar doctrines of a Church shall be strictly inculcated upon tender minds.

I have said enough to shew that I am not asking you to substitute aspiration for Theology. In the Word and Sacraments we have the most definite Divine purpose and action set forth. The power of the Gospel was at the first, and has been always since, in its recognized authenticity. The Church has shewn most life when the members have believed most simply in a Divine Spirit moving amongst them and in them, stirring them to action in conformity with the Divine purposes, and shaming their tendencies to individualism and exclusiveness. And a theology is distinctive enough,—alas! too distinctive,—which affirms emphatically the eternal dispositions of God towards men, which presents Divine ends as ends, and makes means no more than means. What we want is distinctive Theology, unceasing references and appeals to the Mind and Will of God as interpreted in the mind and acts of Jesus Christ. We are in danger of losing Theology in Ecclesiology.

Nothing less strong than a theology full of the gracious purposes of God will prevail to overcome the divisions amongst men for which the flesh finds unlimited occasion. If the appeal is only to men's feelings of to-day, or to the traditions in which their feelings of other days found embodiment, you positively invite innumerable sect-variations, you suggest endless opportunities for splitting hairs and insisting upon divisive forms. And whether you coax or dictate, you do not invoke the one authority to which the inmost consciences of men own allegiance. When God Himself is heard to speak then the busy fancies and pretensions of men may be hushed into silence. It is nothing that temporary gains for religion may be won by the appeal to private judgment and feeling, or by the appeal to the *prestige* of inherited forms; it does not follow that by such religion we shall have been brought further towards the oneness of believing in and knowing the Son of God. Active competition may be the means of largely developing religion, but the question will remain "Is Sectarian religion an unqualified benefit to mankind?"

And to think of escaping from Sectarianism by taking refuge in Secularism would be the vainest delusion. Secularism is even ludicrously impotent to conquer the tendencies which cause divisions. There may be good indeed in bringing people together to work for the most limited objects. It is good to practise reticent courtesy, to learn mutual deference and consideration, in dealing with matters upon which there can be no very exciting differences of opinion. So far, a secularist theory of co-operation may abundantly justify itself. But let no one suppose that merely secular interests can be the whole of human life. Say that for some united work, such as that of instruction, you have carefully excluded all allusion to the unseen world and what may follow after death; say that in order to be completely fair you have excluded all topics in which absence of such allusion might be regarded as a presumption for denial or non-recognition. You may be absolutely unsectarian over the multiplication table and other useful branches of learning, but what will you have left out? The things which men care about; the questions which will never cease to agitate them; the interests which awaken them from torpor; the motives which urge them to make sacrifices; the aspirations which exalt them to their highest beauty of character; all by which they rejoice, hope, fear, thrill, tremble, and burn. There will still be the higher and grander part of life to deal with. It is a true instinct which assumes that the complement of secularism is sectarian Religion.

Let us then work together, Churchmen and Dissenters, Christians and unbelievers, in such things as we can. Let us refer to the deepest principles which we hold in common, and keep unspoken, in a considerate reserve, the convictions which are not shared by all men. Where courtesy or common rights will not be violated by utterance, let Christians and

Churchmen speak out their faith. Let us not be ashamed of it; let us try only not to degrade it by perversions, not to dishonour it by unworthiness. There is nothing for which the world is now hungering so much as for a faith in Divine purposes of love embracing all mankind. From those who speak about Divine grace but who add that in effect God knows only a few, men are moved to turn away with a repugnance which is more than half inspired by the Spirit of God and of Christ. Attempts to affirm a unity of mankind and mutual obligations of men and to persuade to a hope for the future of the world, not resting on any foundation but what is seen and temporal, will continue to chill and distress the minds which have learned not to be satisfied with the horizon of this life, and with the self-originating notions and efforts of men. It is for us to let the Church be known as a witness for the gospel of universal grace, as the minister of a divinely ordained universal unity. We are called to be on the watch against all that induces men to distrust the grace of God and the Mission of the Church; to remove stumbling-blocks out of the way; to testify against every kind of oppression, and hardness, and injustice; to declare that class is made to help class, the higher to serve the lower, the stronger to defend the weaker; to promote whatever changes may be best suited to bring out the eternal ends in their brightness, and to do all this in the name and power of a present God and Saviour.

Let not our hearts fail us at an auspicious time. Let us have confidence in Him who has called us, and ask Him to strengthen us for any task that He lays upon us.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. WALTER LAWRANCE, M.A.,

Rector of St. Alban's Abbey,

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, MAY 5, 1872.

"*Wait for the promise of the Father.*"—Acts i, 4.

It is a characteristic of our nature, so common as to be almost an instinct, to look forward. We see it in every stage of our existence here. We see it in the child, who looks forward eagerly to the time when it shall be emancipated from its lessons and from the control of its teachers, and be able to do as it sees its elders do. We see it again in the youth ambitious to get settled in life, to have some employment, some profession. We see it, further, in middle age, when the man with his family growing up around him is desirous that the time shall soon arrive, when he may retire and may enjoy that which his energy has won. Nor is it absent from the old; they too, when their years are closing still hope that there may be spared to them some few years yet, that they may enjoy the honour, the love, obedience, and troops of many friends which make old age happy. It is so common a thing, and as I have said, so characteristic of us, that when we see anyone who lives, as we say, in the past, who is always thinking of what might have been, who always talks regretfully and sadly, it comes upon us with a painful sense of contrast to what we ordinarily feel. We know that some grievous adversity has befallen that man, some heavy, it may be hopeless sorrow, which has changed for him the aspect of all his life. Now this tendency in all of us to look forward is not blameworthy, few of our implanted tendencies are blameworthy, except when they are carried to excess, and this one, like all our implanted tendencies is not thwarted, but is turned aright; is not checked but is guided, by Christianity: and by

Christianity I mean Christ, for He is it. You remember how He led His disciples on; how He ever pointed them to something in the future. From His Ministry, it was to His Passion. "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of men and they shall kill Him." Then from His Passion to His Resurrection—"and the third day He shall rise again." At His Resurrection He at once tells Mary of His Ascension—"Go tell my brethren and say, I ascend unto my Father and to your Father, and to my God and your God." When He speaks of His Ascension to His disciples He reminds them of the coming of the Comforter—"Behold I send the promise of my Father upon you," and He left them, to ascend up to where He was before. And the angel said to them that stood by, reminding them of a second coming—"This same Jesus which is taken up from you shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go." Their feelings at the time the words of the text were spoken must have been of an acute nature. They knew now that they were parting from their best and only Friend, as they did not know before the Passion. They knew Him as their Saviour only after His Resurrection, but now He was to go and they began now to understand what they had only hitherto been called upon to believe without understanding, and what they hardly believed, that it was well for them that He should go away. But He does not allow them to waste any time in regret, to think of what they might have done and how they might have been guided if He had remained. He reminds them it is well He should go. He speaks to them of the promise of the Father, the Holy Spirit whom the Father should send in Christ's name. At the same time, anxious as they must have been to proclaim those tidings that now filled their hearts and were ever after to be the overmastering passion of their lives, He tells them still to wait in quiet, in expectation and in prayer. And as Jesus led His disciples on so does He lead us on. Our religion is a religion of hope, if it is anything. Do we allow ourselves sometimes in a yearning desire to regret that we cannot behold what St. John and St. Peter saw; that we cannot stand, even if it were only on the outskirts of the crowd and listen to His discourse; do we allow that yearning sometimes to grow and take shape as a doubt? Doing that which is unwise as we all know, in earthly matters—looking backwards—do we say, so many years have gone since Christ walked upon earth, so many persons tell us there may be something of legend about His story; there are so many discrepancies brought forward, there are so many gainsayers—Oh! that He would come again on earth if it were only for an instant—Oh! that He would show Himself amongst us but for a moment, that He might thus by His returning presence confound the gainsayers, and that thus He might, alas! convince me? Surely this is wrong of us. We forget the blessing which is attached to our faith, which is of its very essence—"Blessed are they who have not seen and yet have believed." Our religion is something more than a history, though it is based upon it. The history of that which was once done is the beginning, but not the end. It was the unsealing of the fountains, but not their closing. The facts of the Ministry, of the Passion, of the Resurrection, of the Ascension, these facts, and facts they are, are meant to give us strength to go forward in our daily life; they are not, they should not be to us, as some pale legend of the past, but as things ever fresh, ever new within us; for here is the province of our faith. Without faith it is impossible to please God, and "faith is the substance of things hoped for"—not the struggle after things gone by.

And we forget, when we allow ourselves to fall into these doubts, the very office of the indwelling Spirit; that office which commenced in its fullness when Christ departed, and could not commence before; that Spirit to whose influences we are taught to submit ourselves and who is to guide us into all truth. We speak sometimes of the incompleteness, the disappointment that hangs over all human efforts. We know that against them there is a doom written. We know that the best of man's plans are frustrated, and the most cleverly-wrought designs brought to nothing. We know how those who toil in fields of investigation are obliged at last to give up that which they were pursuing and leave it to others to complete. We know how in the best and holiest work, work done for the Church of God, it is too often the lot of those who have worked most heartily not to live to see the fulfilment and the result of their labour. These things are the very common place of life. Yet, there are few reflections more melancholy, looked at from the worldly side, than those reflections which arise from unfulfilled hopes, from unaccomplished plans, from uncompleted work. How will you meet them, how will you interpret them? No mere philanthropical consideration as to the good of the race, as to the benefit those who come after us will receive from that which we have done, will satisfy us. Philanthropy joined to Christianity, has its truest work and its most extended scope, but without Christianity it is at best but a barren thing, and he who begins by it, if his mind be not guided by religion, is too often apt to relinquish it and subside into selfishness. These things—this incompleteness, his imperfection, for which worldliness professes to have no cure, and which philosophy can only look at with a sigh—these things are interpreted by Christianity, and by Christianity alone. The Christian knows that he is not to look for completeness. He knows that it may please God to take him from this world before that which he hoped to have finished has been done; but he knows also he may wait for a nobler promise, a promise which extends beyond this world, which has its completion indeed and its fulfilment only in the next.

That waiting then is a waiting for the promise of the Father, and that promise is the presence of the Holy Spirit; our Guide, our Illuminator, our Strengthener. He it is who will interpret our disappointments. He it is who will clear away our doubts. He it is who will unravel our perplexities and show us the bright side of sorrow. Do these things sound fanciful to any of us? Has this blessed promise never come to us, or have we never realized, though we have often heard it spoken of, that this indwelling influence may be our own? You do not experience it, because you have not done that by which you might experience it. How many of us pray, as a habit, for that Holy Spirit? You know what our Lord has said, that our Father which is in heaven will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. It has been said and said most truly, that five minutes of heartfelt prayer for the influence and manifestation of the Holy Spirit within us is worth whole years of battling with the symptoms and manifestations of evil. That mission of His is now going on in this world. That presence of His is no longer as it was in old times intermittent, confined to a few, but it is the glorious privilege and prerogative of all. We think of an absent Christ and we forget the present Spirit, who is more to us, for Christ Himself has said it, than if He were amongst us and His voice were heard in our streets.

There is a promise then, you see, but there is a waiting for the promise. There is a promise and therefore it is sure; for He is faithful that promises. And that promise coming from the Father, who shall doubt its fulfilment—its realization? The Father! His adopted children we are. The Father, to whom we are taught to go in sorrow and say—"Father, not my will but Thine be done." The Father, to whom we go repenting from sin, saying, "Father I have sinned against heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son." The Father, into Whose hands we are taught to commend our spirits when they depart. Surely, that which He promises must be realized; surely we can trust in Him. But observe, I do not say that in all of us the Holy Spirit has not, in a measure, been shed abroad, for I trust and believe that it has. But I do say that it is the lot of many of us to wait, and to have to wait, for the full manifestation of the influences of that Spirit. Do you not know what it is, after saying your prayers, to feel that hardly a single laggard thought has been lifted up to heaven? You have not been able to realize God's presence in your heart. Do you not know what it is, after returning from the Holy Communion, to feel a sense of numbness and deadness as though you had done what you had done merely as a duty, but it had not raised or strengthened you as you had hoped? But do not suppose because you do not feel the gift that therefore it is not there. Remember, and you cannot remember it too often, that feelings are a matter of temperament, and that God's grace is independent of temperament. Be content to believe that in His own good time He will manifest to you the fulness of the working of His Blessed Spirit. Go home and pray,—pray especially at this time, on this Sunday, on these next three days—pray earnestly that you may realize the blessings which may descend upon your heads. Wait if they have not come yet, but do not doubt their coming.

But there is another kind of waiting, a waiting which is harder, perhaps, than that which I have already named, it is when we have to wait instead of working. That time may have come to some of us. It is sure to come to some; the time when our capacity for duty and for work is no longer what it was; when the opportunities have been removed that once we enjoyed; when, though we are eager to do something, God does not allow us to do it. That may be our trial and it is a heavy one. That is the test of our faith. Oh! do not decline it. Do not doubt because God does not allow you to work for Him that, therefore, His love has left you, or that your life is useless. You remember what Milton said of his blindness:—

> "God doth not need,
> Either man's work, or his own gifts. Who best
> Bear His mild yoke they serve Him best. His state
> Is kingly: thousands at His bidding speed
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest:
> They also serve, who only stand and wait."

"Wait for the promise of the Father." Apply these words in that slightly transferred sense in which I have used them—apply them to your own hearts, for Christ has given you the right so to apply them. As you would not so long as your health and spirits remain to you waste your time in profitless regrets in temporal matters, so do not in spiritual. Your sins may have such hold upon you that you are not able to look up. Go to Christ; ask Him to forgive you, and then take courage and start on once more. You may have wasted—Ah! which of us has not wasted—many and many precious days in years gone by. Never mind that now. Your time is too short here to spend it in regrets or in remorse. Take heart and go forward still, and where mysteries seem to you insolvable, there wait for God's interpretation. There is no mystery in this world so insolvable as that ever recurring mystery of death. I mean that strange purpose of God, as it seems to us, by which one is taken and another left; by which one is cut off in the midst of a career of usefulness, while others who seem but to cumber the ground are left living on. And there are some of you I know who hear me to night, to whom that mystery has been presented only during the last few days in what one might call, only it is hardly a Christian word to use, its most appalling form; when one, who was a student in the School of Westminster and had gone thence to Oxford, was cut off in the flower of his years.* He was one the fragrance of whose character to those who knew him was a priceless fragrance; whose character was first unveiled at school and then grew into beauty at Oxford, but whose life is now closed by a sudden catastrophe. Why was this? I cannot tell. He had scarcely numbered three-and-twenty summers, but his work may be done in this way—by those who come after him in his school, who as they remember his bright example, are encouraged by that pattern to walk in Christ's way and finish the work on earth from which he was removed.

It is not then, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ, despondency, but it is hope; it is not regret but resolve, it is not distrust but faith that befits us. And just when this world is most full of care, just when its joys seem most tasteless and its rewards are most indifferent to us, then look forward, for then it is Christ's time in your hearts. Trust Him still, and say as one has said before you:—

"So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone,
And with the morn those angel faces smile,
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

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*Mr. G. W. M. Dasent, Junr., of Christ Church, Oxford, who was drowned while bathing.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 36.

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT

REV. LORD BISHOP OF RIPON,

(R. BICKERSTETH, D.D.)

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. ANNE & AGNES,
WITH ST. JOHN ZACHARY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1872.

(In aid of the Funds of the Royal Asylum of St. Anne's Society.)

"*For we are saved by hope.*"—Romans viii, 24.

There is a sense in which every true disciple of Christ may be spoken of as already saved. He is the child of God by adoption and grace, his sins are forgiven, his person is accepted for the righteousness sake of Christ; he is one with Christ and Christ is one with him, and all the eternal attributes which belong to Christ as God are engaged to bring him to everlasting glory. The testimony of Scripture upon this point is abundantly clear. Call to mind what our Lord Himself said—"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." And again—"My sheep shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." There are some who live in the blessed assurance of this. The Apostle Paul was one. He could say, "I know in Whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day." We have other instances in God's word of Christians who expressed the most entire confidence in their own final salvation. But, on the other hand, salvation may be spoken of as a thing of hope, as a thing not yet fully completed, not yet fully enjoyed. And so it is that we find our blessed Lord Himself saying to His Apostles—"If ye continue in My word then are ye My disciples indeed. And again—"He that shall endure unto the end the same shall be saved." And so the Apostle tells us—"Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the joy that shall be revealed;" and in the book of Lamentations we read, "It is good for a man that he should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." So that while on the one hand salvation may be spoken of as a thing already assured to every true believer in Christ, on the other hand it may be also spoken of as a thing for which we have to hope and to wait; as something not yet fully realized, not completely enjoyed. And in the language of the text the Apostle actually attributes our salvation to hope, that is, of course, instrumentally, not meritoriously, when He says, "For we are saved by hope."

Now there are two enquiries suggested by my text to which I would ask your attention for a few moments. The first is—What is the hope spoken of by the Apostle? And the second is—How does this hope instrumentally save us?

Let us endeavour then to enquire, first of all, what is the hope of which the Apostle here speaks, when he says, "We are saved by hope." It is important to guard against error or misunderstanding on this point. To begin, let me point out what this hope is *not.* First of all then, it is not a vague reliance upon the divine mercy. There are many believers in the mercy of God who are not believers in Christ. There are many persons who regard God, and regard Him truly, as a Being of infinite mercy, whose mercies fail not, because they are boundless as space itself. But then this is not the hope that will save a man, because this hope is quite consistent with an oversight of the truth, that God is infinitely just as well as merciful, and we have no warrant from Scripture to magnify one attribute of God at the expense of another. There is no way in which God can save a man but that by which all His attributes have free scope for exercise; His justice as well as His mercy; His truth and holiness as well as His love and compassion. Neither again, is this a hope which depends upon anything we ourselves can do, and that for this reason, that when we have done our utmost, when we have done all things which we have the power granted to us to do, we are still unprofitable servants. There is no merit in anything we can do. The holiest and best action which any one ever performed is no title to acceptance with God, because the strength by which anything that is good or holy is performed comes from God, and, therefore, if that strength be a gift from God how can we glory in the result which follows from it as though there were anything of merit attached to it. But further, this hope of which Paul speaks is not a mere inoperative wish. Our Lord has said with respect to eternal life; "many shall seek it but shall not be able to find it." Many shall wish to be saved—who does not wish it?—but then if this desire for salvation rests on mere wishing without any corresponding action how can we hope to obtain the result.

Then, if this hope is not a vague reliance on the divine mercy, if it is not a hope which rests upon anything we can do, if it be not an inoperative hope I come to enquire, in fact, what is the hope of which the Apostle here speaks? And now, observe, this hope is a grace imparted to the true believer by the Holy Spirit of God. It is one of the three main steps in that ladder of grace, by which a believer in Christ climbs from earth to heaven. Those three steps are Faith, Hope, Charity. Faith credits all that God has spoken; relies upon His every word, trusts His promises, fears His threatenings. Hope aspires to all that God has promised, plumes her wing and soars upwards to the throne of God, and surveys the bright and glorious inheritance which is promised to them that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. And then Charity, the highest step in that ladder of grace is the assimilation of the soul to God Himself, for "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him."

I would observe still further, that this is a *lively* hope. It is a hope which leads to corresponding action, which rests upon God's word and is mainly fixed upon the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in His glory of which the Apostle speaks as "The blessed hope." "Looking for that blessed hope, even the appearing in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Such then is the hope of which the Apostle speaks in the text, when he says—"We are saved by hope."

Now I come to the second point of the enquiry, which is—How does this hope instrumentally save us? It may be interesting to notice what a prominent position hope occupies in all the ordinary affairs of this present life. There are two great principles of our moral being by which every one of us is more or less continually swayed; the one is hope, the other is fear. If you will only examine carefully, with regard to others or with regard to yourselves, you will find that day after day and almost hour after hour you are under the influence of one or the other of these two principles—hope or fear. You abstain from this because you fear the evil consequences which would follow; you do this because you hope for the good consequences which would follow from such a course of proceeding. The waters of human life would stagnate if they were not continually kept in agitation by the breath of hope. A parent would not educate, a merchantman would not speculate, a husbandman would not sow, a soldier would not fight, a seaman would not navigate, a senator would not legislate, if it were not that in each of these cases there is hope influencing and stimulating to action. So it is in spiritual things. There can be no spiritual life without hope.

And now observe how hope operates, both in the commencement and in the after progress of spiritual life. I trust I am speaking to them who know what real spiritual life means—the life of the soul towards God; or, in other words, the life of God in the soul of man. This spiritual life generally begins in deep conviction of Sin. A man may have been going on for a long term of years without any really anxious thought about his soul, hardly owning himself, except in words, when he is summoned to repeat a solemn form of confession—hardly owning himself to be a sinner in God's sight, and little, if at all apprehensive as to what may befall him beyond the grave. But by some means or other conviction of sin is wrought in the man's soul. He comes to think as he never did before; he comes to realize the truth—here am I the creature of a day, passing on to eternity that can never, never end; with a soul that can never die; with heaven or hell before me, and that for ever and ever, and I am a sinner unprepared for heaven and deserving of hell. "What must I do to be saved." Now that state of conviction brings alarm, and anxiety, along with it, and such as, but for the influence of hope, could end in nothing but despair.

But should the Gospel be revealed to a man under such circumstances as these—let those blessed words be brought home by the power of the Holy Spirit to that man'sheart and conscience —"The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost:" Jesus came "to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him." Jesus said "him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out;" "Come let us reason together, saith the Lord, and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, though they be red like crimson they shall be as wool"—is not this like the sunbeam falling in its brightness and glory on the dark cloud charged with shower and tempest, and producing by refraction through the drops of rain, that glorious arch of promise which though it rises from either end, from the very dust of self-abasement and humiliation yet spans the firmament with its glorious rays of light, and ascends to the very throne of God Himself. There is hope. And instrumentally through this hope, he who realizes it is saved from despair and brought to aspire to the joy and felicity which God has promised to them that love Him. And so it is in the after stages of spiritual life. Now the after progress of spiritual life is generally marked by these three features—delay, conflict, trial. The man who is brought truly to believe in Christ, and to repose on Christ for salvation is not translated at once to heaven; for the most part he is left, while on earth, to undergo a discipline, to serve God, to consecrate his faculties to the will of his Heavenly Father and lead a life of continued self-denial. The delay is irksome, tedious and trying. What can support him under that delay but the hope which reaches onward to the things which God has promised, a hope which can never make ashamed, a hope which is full of glory. And so under the experience of trial, I believe there is no truth more certain than this, that those whom God is disciplining for eternal glory, He generally disciplines in the schoolhouse of trial and adversity. Those trials would over-master us were it not for the promises contained in God's word, upon which hope fastens. "It is good for me," said the Psalmist, "that I have been afflicted;" and so the Apostle says, "our light affliction which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more abundant and exceeding weight of glory." And, if Christ Himself, under the bitter and unexampled trial through which He had to pass was sustained by the hope of the result in which that trial was to issue, so that it was "for the joy set before Him He endured the Cross and despised the shame," so too, may His followers be sustained by hope in the endurance of those trials which God sends to them, not willingly but for their profit in the course of their earthly pilgrimage. And so, too, under conflict. As a man grows in spiritual life, he generally finds he has more and more spiritual enemies to withstand. Old sins which he thought were quite subdued, rise up again to harass and torment him; old forms of temptation which he thought he would never behold again assail him; and under these experiences of conflict what can sustain him but that hope of victory which is assured to the followers of the Lamb. There is a wonderfully sustaining and encouraging power in hope. Let me mention to you an anecdote which illustrates this. Some years ago there was a ship on its way to a distant port. That ship was overtaken by a violent storm. It struck and foundered and the whole crew perished with the exception of a father and his little boy, who was with him when the ship was breaking to pieces. The father lashed his little boy to a spar, and he himself clung to it, and they were washed out to sea. Hour after hour passed away and they were driven at the mercy of the waves. They saw no prospect of any help; no ship appeared in the distance; they had seen one after another of the crew sink in the mighty billows—there they were alone, left, as it were to the mercy of the wind and waves. After lingering in this way for hours, the father felt his strength all but gone, and at last he said to his little boy—"My boy, I can hold on no longer. Farewell! God bless you!" Now that ship had foundered early on the Sunday morning. The little boy remembered this and he said to his father—"Oh, father, hold on a bit yet. This is the blessed Sunday morning, and all the people in England are praying for 'all that travel by land or water.'" That simple expression of the little boy to his father gave hope and courage to the well-nigh exhausted parent. He did hold on and not long after a sail appeared in the distance; the vessel bore down upon the spot, they were lifted into it and they still live to tell of the power of hope to sustain and deliver in the hour of peril. And so, too, with us. We are driven to and fro; tossed on the stormy sea of life; beaten by the fierce winds of temptation, and we feel our strength all but gone and are ready to perish. Oh, how does not the blessed thought that we have a Saviour full of power, and full of love, able and willing to do "exceedingly abundantly for us above all we can ask or think," support our sinking spirit, and refresh our weary souls, and make us feel how true it is that "we are saved by hope."

And the province of hope does not seem to me to be limited only to this present life. The hour will come to each one of us when we shall have to lie down and die, and these bodies of ours in which we now live, and move, and think, and act will have to be surrendered to the cold dark grave. But is there no ray of light that can fall upon the dark chill chambers of that open grave? What says the Psalmist? "My flesh also shall rest in hope." Because we trust in Jesus who is the resurrection and the life, we believe the day will come when the trumpet of the Archangel shall sound, and that sound shall penetrate every grave of earth and every cavern of ocean where the dead lie buried, and all that are in the grave shall hear the voice of the Son of Man, and they that hear shall live. Oh, my friends, may your hope be the Gospel hope. There is no other hope that will stand you in any stead in the hour of death and the Day of Judgment.

I do entreat all of you, lean on Jesus. Do not be afraid to come to Him; He is able, He is willing, He is all sufficient. He can do all things for you. Put your trust in Him; follow Him; cleave to Him and you shall find that He is indeed able to make good His every promise, to blot out all your iniquities; to clothe you with His righteousness, endue you with His spirit, and give you the victory over the world, the flesh and the devil, that He may set you at His own right hand in everlasting glory.

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV.

THE DEAN OF CHICHESTER,

(W. F. HOOK, D.D.)

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

On Sunday, May 26, 1872,

"*The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.*"—Numbers vi, 24-26.

This, my brethren, was the form, divinely appointed, according to which Aaron and his sons—the priests ordained under the Levitical dispensation—were to pronounce their benediction upon Israel. This benediction, is in the original, even more solemn and impressive than in our translation, for the word there used is "Jehovah," and the Jews regarded the sacred name "Jehovah" with a reverence which in the corrupt period of their history degenerated into a superstition. But at all periods, the pious and enlightened, listened to this benediction with peculiar solemnity to the Sacred Name, three times solemnly pronounced: "Jehovah bless and keep thee: Jehovah make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: Jehovah lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." And while humbly receiving the blessing the Israelites must have felt, that in the form thus divinely prescribed, a mystery was involved, a mystery beyond their power to comprehend. And when they found that the Sacred Name was not only pronounced three times, but each time with a different accent, this feeling of awe was the more deeply rooted in their hearts. Indeed, the Jews have a tradition that when the priest pronounced the benediction, he lifted up his hands and disposed his fingers into such a form as to express affinity. As coming from men opposed to Christianity, this is of course, more remarkable, in fact it is so remarkable that it may well induce us to attach no little credit to the tradition itself; but however this may be, the Israelites were confirmed in their opinion that the Sacred Name thrice repeated and each time with a different accent, implied the existence of something mysterious, and they also found something analagous to it in that angelic song—the song which sometimes the prophets had ears to hear—Holy, holy, holy, Lord, (or rather Jehovah.) At other times, indeed, the prophets were impelled, without any apparent or immediate object by the Divine afflatus to the thrice repetition of the Sacred Name, as in the thirty-third chapter of Isaiah; "The Lord," that is, "Jehovah is our Judge, Jehovah is our Lawgiver, Jehovah is our King;" and again in the ninth chapter of Daniel; "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken." Now this expression may seem to some to be mere tautology, but I am speaking to believers, and in this expression, believers find an intimation of the Trinity of Persons which we know to exist in the undivided Godhead. What was a mystery to the Israelites, has through the Gospel become a revelation to us. To us it has been clearly and distinctly revealed, that in the one Divine nature there are three distinct persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. So that God is in one respect One. One in nature, One in will, One in all the Divine attributes and yet in another respect Three. There are in the Divine nature Three Persons, one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity. This is what the universal Church believes. A mystery we will call it; for in one sense a mystery, and an unfathomable mystery it must be; but in another sense it is a revelation, and what is revealed is of course intelligible. Whenever in regard to what is revealed a difficulty arises, it arises from the fact of our passing from the intelligible revelation, to that which, because unrevealed and undiscoverable is of course inexplicable and also mysterious. Until the time shall come, when a further revelation shall be made, the fact is revealed to us that in the Divine nature there are three persons —the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The fact is also revealed to us that in the work of creation and in the work of redemption each person has been pleased to exercise His office, though the work of the Sacred Three is the work of the One and only One. One of our greatest metaphysicians speaking upon this subject, not directly, but with reference to what we call natural, that is, unrevealed religion observed—"all that we are logically entitled to infer with reference to the Divine nature, with respect to the Deity, is unity of design." The absolute and necessary unity of the Divine power as attempted to be proved by metaphysical arguments and *a priori* evidence, we are entitled to assert is more than independent of revelation. The unity which we can alone discern with confidence in the light of nature is wholly relative to that unity of design which we can trace in the universe. Now this is precisely the unity revealed to us in Holy Scripture, and we are involved in mystery; when not content with what revelation discovers, we desire to ascertain how and in what manner it is that God exists, Three in one sense and One in another. We, who cannot understand the nature of our own souls, or what constitutes our personal identities, are not likely to understand the nature of the Infinite —the Eternal God Almighty. We can only receive with gratitude those facts with relation to the Divine nature which the great God has Himself been pleased to make known to us and the knowledge of which so nearly concerns the justification of our race and the sanctification of our souls.

And so as we pass on to a more practical view of the subject, we may here remark, that in this, as in reference to so many other subjects, when we carefully study consequences we find them pursuing the very course we should expect them to pursue. And in our study of the Bible we should always bear in mind that this is a Divine Book, the Author of which is none other than the living God Himself, even God the Holy Ghost. It has indeed pleased God, in the composition of the Sacred Volume, to employ the agency of man according to that principle through which we are bound to one another, and by which man is made the instrument through which Divine blessings are given to man. But still man has only been employed in what relates to Holy Scripture as a pen—the hand of a ready writer to reveal the mind of God to man. And as the character of the letters may differ when impressed upon the paper, and be but the impressions of the pen of the writer, so in the sacred writers there are diversities of style, but the message is the message of God. God inspired the man—not the words of the man—leaving the inspired man to tell the message in his own way, the message not of man but of God Himself. Bearing in mind then, I say, the fact that the revealed God is the Author of the Bible, but that holy men of old wrote as they were moved of the Holy Ghost, and bearing in mind therefore that the Author of the Bible is Omnipotent, we should expect to discover what we do actually find, that the Omniscient Author of the Bible when employing the pen of man to convey certain truths to a particular generation, was not unmindful of future generations. So that while certain truths were clearly understood by the generation to which the revelation was first made, there were at the same time underlying truths connected with that revelation implied, obscurely hinted, intended for a generation to come which would be more enlightened; and these were of course, mysteries, enigmas at the time—soluble but not to be solved by the existing generation.

Now this order of things was exalted by the circumstance that the Bible, although a manual composition, was to be the Book of all ages, the expression of God's will to all generations of men. What the Divine Author intended for the good of patriarchs and the patriarchal dispensation, what He designed for the instruction of the Israelites under the Levitical dispensation, He also intended to make profitable to us who are here gathered together in His name in this sacred building in this nineteenth century, with the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of us. To the Author of the Bible all things are known. He calls things as though they were not what they were. To Him one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. Therefore, we should not expect on the one hand to find the fact of the Trinity of three persons in one Godhead clearly revealed to the Israelites. They were not in a state of sufficient intellectual advancement to receive that important fact which has been subsequently made known to the Church; but on the other hand the fact itself, though unrevealed, having existed in all eternity we should expect to find intimations of that fact in every part of the Sacred Volume—intimations intelligible to us to whom a revelation on the subject has been made, though it was mysterious to those who lived before the completion of the Bible and the Apocalypse of St. John. For example, knowing as we do that while the Father was the Creator of all things, all things were also made by the Son and that without Him was not anything made that was made. And it is only what we should expect when we meet in the account which is given us of the creation of man, with such an expression as that which occurs in the beginning of the Bible; "Let *us* make man in *our* image," words which are meaningless unless they imply the existence of more persons than one together with a unity of design. Now when the writers of the Old Testament wrote such a passage as this, their feeling must have been, 'this is something we cannot understand, it is a mystery; what is at present inexplicable to us, will one day be made clear.' But when *we* who live under the noontide ray of the Gospel revelation, peruse this statement we see in the expression "let us" an intimation of the Trinity of persons as it exists, and in the expression "our image," not "images," an intimation of the unity of the Divine nature. And we are not surprized, it is only what we should expect to find when learned Hebraists inform us that if the first words of the Bible were rendered literally, they would run thus "Gods the Creator," and they go on to inform us that in upwards of two thousand instances, "God" is described by a plural substantive the adjuncts of which whether verbs, adverbs, or pronouns are in the singular number. And this being the case we see the necessity of that caution given in the Bible to such expressions as in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy; "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God," or as it stands translated literally: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah," plurality in unity. It was then with reverence, with fear and awe, with a holy submissive sense of the spirit of the words that the believers of old knelt down and received the blessing which Aaron and the sons of Aaron pronounced with their hands expanded: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee and give thee peace." And when on a bed of sickness, my brethren, we hear the minister of the Gospel, as directed in the office for the Visitation of the Sick, pronounce this very benediction upon us, we too, shall hear them in the conviction that while conveying a blessing to the ear of faith, before the impending death stroke, we shall soon see with more extended vision where we shall know even as we are known and observe that they involve even a deeper peace than any made known to the most favoured of the children of God.

But when we have looked closer into our text, we find that the great fact before us is not only implied generally, but there is a particular reference to the distinct and peculiar blessings conferred by the One Godhead on the members of His Church; each Person in the one Godhead distinctly and peculiarly undertakes to discharge and from which distinct and peculiar blessings, results have ever flowed. The New Testament represents the first person of the ever blessed Trinity appearing in respect to certain of His creatures in the relation of a Father; the second person appearing in the light of a Saviour; and the third person of the Holy Trinity as discharging the office of Comforter or of a friend, ever ready to act a true friends' part—one sole, undivided Trinity having raised us from the evil involved in the fall, and prepared us for heaven. God does not of necessity stand in a paternal relation to His creatures, but filial affection in those who are justified by faith and baptized into His Church He vouchsafes and encourages by representing Himself—the first person of the Godhead—as a father, a father who is prepared to act towards them as a wise and loving father would be expected to act towards the children of his house. It would be only a mere figure of speech to speak of God as the father of inanimate creation, for in inanimate creation there is no relation; neither is he father by nature to the natural man. His heart being alienated from God, man is brought back to his sonship towards God through the mediation of the second person of the Trinity who took our nature upon Him through His atoning sacrifice and removed the impediment to our adoption. And then, when we become through His mediation the children of God, the Holy Ghost takes up His abode in our hearts and brings us into communion with all that is holy, with the "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty." This is what is intimated and conveyed in the ordinary blessing of the Christian Church. First, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," the second person of the Godhead, incarnate. Then the sequence—"the love—the paternal love of God," and then the further sequence, "the fellowship of the Holy Ghost." When the first person of the ever blessed Trinity condescends to accept us as His children we become forthwith objects of His special providence and care. And prayer is that mode of our approaching the first person through the mediation of the Son and the sanctification of the Spirit. When the second person in the one Godhead is pleased to act as the mediator, He does so by uniting us to Himself, and the two Sacraments are the special mode through which the second person is to be approached. We being through Him admitted as children to our Father's house and blest with our Father's love. But although, through the Sacraments of the Gospel, we become one with Christ, and Christ one with us, this end could not be accomplished in us unless these ordinances were approached with penitence and with faith. Being by nature born in sin and children of wrath and seeing we cannot bring a clean thing out of an unclean thing, the Sacraments are unapproachable by any of us unless the Holy Ghost be in us giving us that which by nature we cannot have —a new heart. And we approach the Holy Ghost by an honest endeavour to do whatsoever He, in the Scriptures, supposed to be written by inspiration, has thus directed us to do.

We have then, my brethren, now, as at all times both an encouragement and a warning. If you will not endeavour to do the duties which devolve upon you according to the circumstances of the state of life to which you are called in the providence of God; if you will not endeavour to overcome the evil passions through which Satan seeks to effect your ruin; if you will not by self-denial attempt to benefit all whom the providence of God brings near to you; if you will not seek to resist the temptations which keep you from His house and service, as a general rule, though you happen to be here this day, if these things be so—well then, beloved, it is not for man to judge you, you can yourselves draw the inferences of what will follow. But though he who addresses you now judges you not, he is, as a minister of the living God, in duty bound to warn you. "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways, for why will ye die." And the minister of Jesus Christ may add the words of Jehovah Himself—"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked," therefore turn and live. Turn now, for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation." Turn now, for now the Son is offered; now the Spirit strives; now the Father is waiting to bless. Turn now, for ere long the Son may no more be offered; ere long the Spirit may cease to strive; and ere long the Father may say in His wrath—"Ye shall not enter into my rest."

There is, we see a constituted order of things, a sequence of events; and this system continues in the next world, so that from your evil deeds misery must inevitably follow unless while the Lord Jesus is offered as the Divine Saviour—and He is only offered in this world—you come into the terms of salvation. And if you will say from the heart—"The Lord being My helper I will turn;" if you will endeavour, earnestly endeavour, heartily endeavour to reject all sinful desires, all unregenerate affections; if you will endeavour to do your duty to your God, your neighbour and yourself; if you will study more minutely to know what your duty is and to share in the great act of Christian worship in the Holy Communion, then what does the Gospel promise? Not that you will be perfected as a matter of course and as a miracle; not that there will be no shortcomings, and that there will be no relapses. No, my brethren, not that. But it promises the supernatural assistance of God the Holy Ghost who will gradually work such a change in you as will make you new men, in some indescribable way helping you in temptation; giving you patience in sorrow; strengthening you in every conflict; confirming your faith yet more and more; brightening your hopes; enlarging your charity, and yet keeping you humble. And thus living through the merits of Jesus Christ our Lord, in Him, and being made by faith one in Him, the Father will see you as children, for whom a heavenly mansion has been prepared—towards whom you may evince all filial affection, and from whom, you may expect all that a prodigal and penitent son may expect from a Father who loves him.

May God the Father grant this, giving you His love and causing all things to work together for your good: may God the Son make His face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you, giving you to see God in Him reconciling the world to Himself; may God the Holy Ghost lift up His countenance upon you and give you all the comfort which results from a conscience at peace with God.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 37.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, APRIL 28, 1872.

"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come."—St. John xvi, 12, 13.

All the Gospels appointed for the Sundays after Easter are taken from that according to St. John. One only—that for the first Sunday—belongs to the period which we are still commemorating, the forty days which passed between the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ. The other four are from discourses of Christ pronounced before His crucifixion; the last three are from the one discourse pronounced in the supper room.

Historically speaking, then, these Gospels seem to be at first sight out of place, and in reading them we go back from Easter time to a time from which we are presumably separated by the Crucifixion and Resurrection; yet looking carefully at the contents of these Gospels we must see that they are strictly in place. They are preparations for the real departure, and for that which shall follow it. They might have been spoken, so far as the matter goes—I am, of course, saying nothing of their immediate purpose—they might have been spoken during the great forty days just as well as on the eve of the Crucifixion. Our Lord has just referred to His approaching departure, and, as was natural, sorrow has filled the hearts of His disciples. In order to relieve their distress He proceeds to explain to them that His departure was not merely to be glorious for Himself but expedient for them. If He remained upon earth, the Holy Spirit the Comforter would not come to them. If He Himself remained among them continuously He could not even be the object of a purely spiritual apprehension, for where the sight is satisfied there is not sufficient room for faith; and so far there would be no reason for the aid of that Divine and invisible Friend who is the Author of all real faith in the soul of man. But if Christ departed, then faith would become necessary, as it would be possible; and our Lord promised to send Him who should be the author and giver of this faith. "If I depart I will send Him unto you."

When He comes, what will He do? First, He will achieve a moral victory over the world, and thus make the task of the Apostles easier. He will reprove the world of sin. He will convince it gradually but surely of the mistake, of the crime, of rejecting Jesus. Next He will reprove the world of righteousness. He will teach it that there does exist a higher ideal of righteousness than it had yet known; that the precepts of Christ are higher than any Pagan or Pharisaic idea which had yet come before it, because the Ascension will have demonstrated, even to sense, the righteousness of the ascended Christ. "Because I go to the Father." Lastly, He shall reprove the world of judgment. He will teach the world that the Crucifixion which seemed to be the very victory of the Evil One, was really his day of humiliation and of judgment; that, "the prince of this world is judged."

But what will He teach the Church? What will He say to those Apostles who believed in Him, and who followed Him, and who in losing Him appeared to be losing their all? This is the question more immediately before us.

Now, this question is partly answered by our Lord in the words of the text, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." And these words, mark you, have a double—that is to say, a doctrinal and a practical—significance. They teach us a great truth about Christian doctrine and they teach us one or more serious duties of the Christian life. They shew us first of all that our Lord's own teaching during His sojourn upon the earth, did not embrace all necessary Christian doctrine.

Now, this is a point of great importance. It is not unusual to hear persons say in the present day "I am a Christian, but then I am a Christian in this sense: I accept, I believe, I obey, the very words of Christ. The words of Christ are enough for me; I want no more. The Apostles—St. Paul especially—taught certain doctrines which Christ Himself did not teach. I do not wish to be bound by those super-added doctrines. The Church in her Creeds, as elsewhere, has used language which I do not find in the words of Christ. I feel myself at liberty to reject that language. It is enough for me to read, to admire, to feel the beauty—the incomparable beauty—of the Sermon on the Mount. This is genuine; this is essential; this is real; this is the true and imperishable Christianity; the rest I consider, in different degrees, superfluous. It may be very well in its way, but it stands on a totally different footing. There can be no serious harm in rejecting it."

Now this language, in substance at least, has been used by one writer of recent notoriety, and it commends itself because it sounds at first so very loyal to our Lord. It seems to give implicit credit to His words; and all the more so, because it appears to refuse such credit to the words of all others; just as politeness from a particular individual to another is more remarked and remarkable, when the person who shews it is habitually uncivil to all the rest of the world. By using such language as this, men flatter themselves that they can do two things at once; that they can cut down the Christian creed to the very narrowest dimensions, and at the same time be all the better and more emphatically Christian for keeping strictly and exclusively to the teaching of Christ. It is, you see, a raid upon the claims of Faith, conducted in the name of an extraordinary reverence for the very Object of faith. And yet here to-day, as we listen to our Lord speaking in the Gospel, we find Him saying as plainly as He can, in this His last discourse, that He Himself did *not* undertake to teach in person *all* that was necessary for His disciples as Christians to know and to believe to their souls' health. He says clearly, that He had many things to tell His disciples which they could not bear at the time, and which He meant to tell them not at present in person but hereafter by the agency of another, the unseen Comforter, the Holy Spirit. After He had left the world, so far as His visible presence was concerned, He would still from His invisible home speak to man. By His Spirit He would speak in and through His Apostles. What the Apostles taught would be

His teaching, even though it should go beyond anything which He had actually said Himself. For He had not said all He meant to say. His work of teaching was to be finished by others. To the Apostles He said, "He that heareth you heareth Me; he that rejecteth you rejecteth Me, and he that receiveth Me receiveth Him that sent Me." The man therefore who should think himself a greater Christian for keeping only to the words of Christ, would—let us say it plainly—deceive himself. He cannot keep only to the words of Christ, if he keeps really to *all* the words of Christ, because among the words of Christ is the saying in the text, which states as clearly as possible that over and above Christ's own actual teaching, there were truths to be taught in His name and by His direct authority—truths which as coming from Him although by the mouth of the Apostles, other Christians were to receive and believe.

There are, indeed, other words of our Saviour in this very discourse which at first sight seem to be at variance with the statement that He had many things to say to His disciples which they could not bear at the time. "Henceforth," He said, "I call you not servants, for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth; but I call you friends and for this reason; all things that I have heard of the Father, I have made known unto you." Here, I say, there seems to be a contradiction of the statement in the text, that Christ had still many things to say to His disciples which they could not bear at the time, but there is no contradiction in reality. So far as confidence on His side went, our Lord trusted His disciples unreservedly. They were admitted to His most intimate councils. But on their side there was a want of spiritual comprehension. They were not yet able to receive all He had to tell them, and therefore He reserved till a later time what He was not willing to communicate at once. We understand this distinction in every day life. Many a man has a wife, a sister, a child, from whom he has literally no secrets whatever, but who is not, on that account, able to share all his practical or intellectual interests. He may be willing to confide everything, but he may know that to enter into an account of all his thoughts at once would be a sheer waste of time; he therefore imparts a portion but defers the further disclosure until a time when it is likely to be appreciated. He has already made it in spirit; He has made it in intention. He does not trust the less because He does not communicate secrets which would be unintelligible. The time will come—it will come soon enough—when what is now unintelligible will be understood.

Our Lord's teaching, then, was completed by that of the Holy Spirit. To see how this was done, we need not to-day go beyond the limits of the New Testament. "He shall take of Mine," said our Lord, "and shall shew it unto you." Our Lord gave the germ which the Apostles, as the mouth-pieces of the Holy Spirit, expanded into doctrines. Our Lord spoke, for instance, of the necessity which lay upon the Messiah that He should die, in order to correspond with the words of prophecy. "The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him." He spoke of the blood of the Messiah as the blood of the New Testament, which was to be shed for the disciples. In the Apostolic writings this is expanded into the Doctrine of the Atonement. By Christ's death men are represented as being brought back from the captivity of sin and death. A propitiation for our sins, and the sins of the whole moral world, is represented as being offered by the free self-sacrifice of the Perfect Christ; and thus between God and man a peace, or reconciliation, is really effected. We are accepted if we believe.

Our Lord had hinted at a new ground of acceptance with God in His parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard, in His eulogy upon the Publican, who went down to his home justified rather than the Pharisee—in His precept "When ye have done all that is required of you, say we are unprofitable servants." But in St. Paul's writings we find set forth and elaborated in full, the doctrine of Salvation through Christ, as contrasted with the previously existing notion of Salvation through strict and literal obedience to the Jewish Law. "By the works of the Law shall no flesh be justified." That is one side of the doctrine. "By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." That is the other side of the doctrine.

Again, in the visit of the Eastern Sages to the Manger of Bethlehem; in the account of the Syro-Phœnician woman; in the interview with the Greeks at the Passover; in the statement that the Good Shepherd had other sheep that were not of the fold of Israel, but which He must bring in, and make one fold, under one Shepherd; we have hints that the Pagan nations were to have their part, somehow, in the Divine Saviour. In St. Paul's writings we find the express assertion that a spiritual revelation had been made to him to the effect that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body and partakers of the promises in Christ by the Gospel. The entire equality of Pagan and Jewish converts within the Church of the New Testament was thus based upon hints in our Lord's own language and practice, but only drawn out into a sharply defined doctrine by His great Apostle.

Once more Our Lord spoke about Himself, about His sinlessness, about His claims on human thought and human affection, about His power of enlightening and saving human beings, about His future coming to judge all human beings—in a way which we should think very extraordinary in any good man now-a-days, and, indeed, fatal to his claim to goodness, because inconsistent with presumable sober fact. Yet there is no denying the tremendous self-assertion of Christ our Lord, so varied as it is, so persistent, so unflinching. He does not—He will not present Himself as the prophets had done, only to teach men truths about God and duty, and then to withdraw Himself from their hearing and sight as quietly as possible—He came to proclaim Himself, to exhibit Himself, to draw all hearts, all eyes towards Himself, as the Way, the Truth and the Life to man; as the Light of the world, as He who should come to be the King and Judge of all. He teaches that He is Himself, in the last resort—the subject of His own doctrines. He reveals that He Himself is His principal revelation. "All men," He says, "are to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father." "He who hath seen Me," again He says, "hath seen the Father." What could such language mean? How was it to be explained? If it was considered unjustifiable, what claim could the speaker have upon the love and trust of men? If it was considered as really justifiable, literally justifiable in the person of Christ, it could clearly only have been upon the ground that He was more than man; and if He was more than man, then what was He? Were such claims as these to be admitted on behalf of any created being; any angel or archangel; seraph or cherub? Or, was He, indeed of that uncreated and Eternal Essence which all creatures should adore as the source and end of all derived existence? Here it was that the Holy Spirit took up the words of Christ and shewed the truth to the Apostles. These words admitted, in the last analysis, only of one explanation. The speaker, if he was to be received at all, was in deed and truth Divine. And accordingly the Colossians were taught that "He created all things, that He was before all things, and that by Him all things consist," as we have heard in this afternoon's lesson; and the Romans, that He was "God over all blessed for ever;" and the Philippians, that to Him "men, and angels, and all beneath should bow in reverence;" the Hebrews, that He was "the brightness of His Father's glory and the express image of His Person, and upholding all things by the word of His power." And St. John, "in the Spirit, on the Lord's day," sees Him enthroned as the Lamb indeed, slain, and yet glorified, while all the highest intelligences of heaven prostrate themselves before Him and join in the "new song" of adoration around His throne.

The disciples could not have borne the full splendour of these truths when they listened to the Sermon on the Mount, or for a long time afterwards. And yet these truths were the only real justification for the Sermon on the Mount. To assume a power to revise the law given from Sinai, or even to approve and ratify that law, implied that the speaker was one who claimed to be equal in authority with Him who gave that law to Moses. These things understood not the disciples at first; but after Jesus had been glorified, and the Spirit had been given, it became clear what was really meant. In the human sense of the words, no man could say that Jesus was the Lord; but when the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of Truth came, He guided men into all truth.

So in many other instances, these illustrations of the Divine person of Jesus Christ, might be immensely extended, but enough has been said to shew that if the New Testament is to be believed as a whole, our Lord's teaching was *incomplete;* and further, that He Himself knew it, and meant it to be so.

And this brings me to the second and concluding part of the subject, Why was our Lord's teaching thus incomplete; incomplete according to His own will and announcement? Why did He not Himself teach all that could be properly called Christian doctrine? Why did He content Himself with laying the foundation of His religion, leaving the building to be finished according to His own express design and appointment by other hands?

The answer is that the same motives which led Him to teach men at all, led Him also to impose these limits, and restraints, and delays upon His process of teaching. He taught men to emerge from their ignorance because He loved them too well to leave them in it. He taught men gradually, and as they were able to bear the strong light of truth, because He loved men too well to shock or to blind them by the sudden blaze of that truth, for which in its fulness they were as yet unprepared. He did not expect that if the Christian revelation was placed before men at the first in its completeness they could receive it; because He knew what was in man. He knew the deep-rooted prejudices of education; He knew the power of fixed mental habit; He knew the force of the associations of younger days; He knew what the traditions of a great religion can do to destroy all the receptive power the flexibility in the soul of man, and therefore He was too wise and too considerate to expect so much of him. Just as the Sun does not flash forth in a moment out of the darkness of night, but gives warning of his approach, and then rises gradually and diffuses a vast body of light before we see him rise in all his glory above the line of the horizon; so it was with our Saviour. The full understanding of who He was, and what He came to do, was preceded by a kind of twilight. That twilight was itself His own work, and it brightened more and more, moment by moment, towards the day. He rose amid the mists of imperfect apprehensions—and misapprehensions—as to who and what He was; and not until He was high in the heavens did He permit the full truth to break upon the intelligence of the world. In this He was true to God's providential action throughout human history. All along the course of the ages, God has taught men gradually. The heathen nations were taught, what little truth they knew amongst their mass of errors, by a succession of great minds raised up each one of them, in the providence of God, to advance them a single step towards the light, as men who had so long lived in darkness could bear it.

The Jewish Scriptures consisted of a long series of revelations, comprising first the Patriarchal, then the Mosaic, and then the Prophetical, each an advance upon its predecessor, and all leading up to the final and complete revelation of God in Christ. When He who had in divers ways spoken to the fathers by the prophets, in the last days of the world's history, as they seemed to the writer, spake by His Son.

This gradual unfolding of the mind of God throughout all the ages, to the last great revelation that He made, is based throughout, at every step of it upon His tender and loving consideration for human weakness. "I have yet many things to say unto you but ye cannot bear them now," is written over every earlier and imperfect revelation; not to depreciate its value, but to explain why it is not fuller than it is; to shew why God, who has thus spoken, is silent until He speaks again.

And now observe the practical lessons which follow from this.

What should be the true principle of the religious education of children and uninstructed persons? To be solid, all such education should be gradual. It should be given only as the learner's mind becomes acclimatized to the atmosphere of religious truth. Our Lord's tenderness in teaching religious truth only as men could bear it, was copied by the Apostles. We find distinctions drawn between the various grades. First, we have the "babes in Christ," those who were just beginning to learn the first lessons of Christian truth and duty. Then we come to the strong and perfect men who have completed, or ought to have completed their Christian education. To the first was given that elementary form of Christian instruction which from its easiness of reception the Apostle terms "milk." To the second was imparted a much more comprehensive instruction in the mysteries of the Christian Creed and in the range of Christian duty; and this the Apostle, keeping up the metaphor, terms "strong meat."

This double order of teaching so instituted by the Apostles, passed at once into the practice of the Christian Church, and the catechumens, that is the early converts, were treated differently from the faithful who after Baptism and Communion were in full fellowship with the whole life and thought of the Christian Church. The catechumens it was judged, could only bear one form of spiritual nourishment, but the faithful would be satisfied with nothing less than an altogether different diet. This principle, this prudent principle, holds good of secular education. It is too much lost sight of in some of the modern methods. In these days the old and deeper idea of education as a means of training and exercising the faculties of the mind so as to enable the educated boy or man, to deal with any subject that might come before him in the way of duty has been abandoned, only too largely for that modern idea of education, which simply loads the pupil's mind with huge quantities of unmastered and unmanageable learning, and not seldom becomes the fruitful cause of severe cases of intellectual indigestion. Boys are expected to know something about everything. In the effort to achieve universal knowledge, they arrive at knowing nothing thoroughly. And the consequence is that, while they can talk with striking and unnatural facility on a great many more subjects than boys did forty or fifty years ago, their mental faculties are really less braced and sharpened, and their actual capacity, it is to be feared, for meeting the requirements of life, is considerably less than that of their predecessors.

So in teaching religious truth, parents are not unfrequently apt to fall into the same mistake. They want to teach everything at once: they end by teaching nothing. They manage to forget the primary and necessary duty of every teacher, that of placing himself by an act of sympathy and imagination as nearly as he possibly can, in the mental position of the pupil or child. They think chiefly, or only of what interests themselves in religion; not of what might be interesting or intelligible to minds just opening into life, and catching, with no little difficulty, the horizons of truth and duty which first meet its gaze. They are interested in this or that controversy of the day, and they expect their children to be interested also. They are accustomed to express themselves on religious subjects in such and such abstract phraseology and they expect their children to understand it. They have arrived at this or that idea or impression most precious in itself as to the heinousness of Sin—as to the value of our Lord's work—as to the signs of God's favour bestowed upon more or less holy souls, and they expect their children to do so too. But what is the consequence? Either the children are alienated from all real religion when they grow up, owing to the thoughtless but well-meant eagerness with which, without anything to make it intelligible—without any adequate interpretation—it has been thrust on them in their earliest years; or else these children learn that most fatal of all the lessons that can be learnt in connection with religion, to talk about it easily, without thinking what they say. They learn to allow religious *phrases*, to outrun religious thoughts, religious conviction and purposes, and so they create a habit of insincerity in dealing with the most serious of all subjects; which is only too certain in the long run, depend upon it, to sap the springs of real faith and life.

One practical lesson from this is to bear in mind that up to our very last day, God is teaching each one of us through the action of other minds,—through all the events of life. Each successive stage of life up to the very last, leaves some truth untaught. Down to the end of the very longest life, some truth may be learnt that was untaught before. We are daily adding to our experience. We never till we draw our last breath complete our education. As in the first flush of youth we exult in a sense of animal vivacity or of mental buoyancy, Christ from His throne of justice and truth looks down and says, "I have many things to say to thee young man, or young woman, but thou canst not bear them now." If He were to teach us all at once, compressing into one awful and overwhelming lesson all the stern and varied experiences of the future, it would be too much for us to bear; too much for our weakness; too much for our proneness to despair. What life is and means as the very threshold of Eternity. What are the high and sacred uses of its disappointments and its sufferings? Why it is better to suffer for doing what is right than to succeed by doing what is wrong. What the events, the persons, and the things of Time are worth when compared with the Eternal realities? These, the deepest lessons of life; lessons which can only be learned gradually, and in most cases painfully. Friends die; health becomes weak; life loses year by year, its early promise; the brilliant spring-tide issues in a hot and arid summer, in a prosaic and darkening autumn; and thus at each step the soul is thrown back from the outward and the passing, upon the inward and the Eternal. Gradually and imperceptibly one truth leads the way in the mind to another; one difficulty surmounted or interpreted, shews the way to explain and overmaster another. It would have seemed impossible beforehand; so we think, as we look back; but as a fact, God has taught us all the more surely because He did not teach us all this at once;—

because He is so tender, so deliberate, as we have often thought, so hesitating in giving us His successive lessons. We think, it may be of the right hand and of the left in our early day dreams, but He waits for us by the way to tender to us at His own time, the cup of which He drank Himself, to administer the baptism with which He was baptized. What can the soul do but breathe the prayer;—

"Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet. I do not ask to see
The distant scene. One step's enough for me."

He has many things to say to us which we cannot bear as yet; but *He* knows best *when* life's deepest lessons will be most needed by us. We have only to do two things; to listen for His voice, and to obey it.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. J. W. GLEADALL, M.A.,

PREACHED IN THE CHAPEL OF THE FOUNDLING HOSPITAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, AUGUST 4, 1872.

"*Is there no balm in Gilead?*"—Jeremiah viii, 22.

Gilead was noted for its aromatic essences—healing balms with which it supplied the wants of neighbouring nations. The Prophet referring to this fact, uses the words "balm in Gilead" in a figurative sense, signifying that there are means and resources with God for the healing of the nations. He contemplates the calamities of the people he is addressing, their distress, their misfortunes, their sufferings brought on by their own sins, idolatries and abominations; and he tells them that if they will forsake their sins and repent and seek after God, there is balm to heal their sins, redress their misfortunes, lighten their sorrows and restore them to peace, and safety, and happiness. The language of the old prophet uttered so many centuries back is still applicable; for us as for the ancient Jews there is, in a figurative sense, balm in Gilead, provision that is, in God's mercy, to meet the sins, the sorrows, of man. I need not dwell on the fact that there is sin and sorrow in the world spread abroad over the face of the nations—sorrow and suffering the consequences of sin; neither need I pause to demonstrate that the Gospel has been sent for the healing of the nations, as a means of alleviating the sorrows of men, but I wish this morning to show how applicable it is for these purposes; how expressly and emphatically it is the healing balm which our condition requires. I wish to make it clear that the Gospel of Christ, when viewed in relation to the needs of human beings in this world, is the very thing of all others of which they stand in need. If you will look at it carefully, and study it in its varied aspects, examine its provisions, see what its efficacy is, and what it is calculated to accomplish, you will observe that it is admirably adapted to satisfy those wants, and to respond to those calls of humanity which when they receive no satisfaction and no response are the causes of disquietude and pain.

Now the sorrows of human beings in this world may be traced to three distinct sources:—a sense of sin; the difficulties and trials of life; and the prospects of the future. Dry up these sources of disquietude, or weaken and mitigate the flow of their bitter waters; let there be no sense of sin upon the conscience, no feeling of responsibility for past transgressions, let there be what will sustain and console under the disappointments and the afflictions of life, let there be no apprehensions of the future to disturb and to agitate, and what then would be the aspect of human life? The page of human history would hardly reveal a single sorrow. Now Christianity is intended and calculated to accomplish this very thing, to produce these very results, to dry up these sources of distress; that is its tendency, its operation, its influence. Just according to the manner in which it is accepted by man, just in proportion to the power it is permitted to exert over a man, so does it dry up, restrain, or mitigate the flow of those bitter streams which poison the waters of life and carry sorrow to a thousand hearts and into a thousand habitations.

With respect to the first source of sorrow, the sense of sin, every human being feels and knows that he has offended the Creator and that he has been guilty of numberless transgressions of the Divine Law. Upon this point human experience is uniform; here are no exceptions. It is true of the savage, true of the civilized, true of all men by whatever diversity of thought, conditions and circumstances they may be distinguished. However men's theories of religion may conflict; however widely they may be separated from each other in the principles they advocate, whether they be sceptics or believers, men of any religion or no religion, they are one in this feeling that they are not what they ought to be. Whatever explanation they may give of the fact, whatever excuses they may plead for it, whether it is traceable to deliberate wickedness, to the fault of nature, or to the strength of temptation, however they may reason about it, and about their responsibility; this fact they never deny, the feeling of responsibility is upon them; they are conscious that their obligations have not been discharged. Call it by what name you will; explain it as you will, it is a sense of sin against God which troubles the human spirit everywhere. And man cannot rid himself of it. He has tried to reason God out of existence or to prove that God is indifferent to what passes among us, and after he has done his best in the way of argument, after he has exhausted demonstration and made his proofs apparently conclusive, he has the evidence within him that his efforts are vain, for the sense of sin still remains to harass and oppress him.

Well, then, is there no redress for this cause of sorrow, no remedy for this agony of the spirit, nothing to lessen or extinguish this sense of sin, no balm in Gilead for it? There is. The load of sin can be taken off and the soul restored to her rest. God has arranged a scheme for the purpose in the Gospel of the Son of God. You know that Christ has borne our sins in His own body on the tree and that, therefore, on that account and by reason of it there is forgiveness with God, and sin need no more harass or disquiet the spirits that repents of it. Nor shall it any longer pain or distract the conscience of him who does repent and forsake it. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and being no longer under condemnation there is, of course, no more pain, no more distress, no more disturbance, no more apprehension about that which caused the condemnation.

With respect to the second source of human sorrows—the disappointments and afflictions of human life, we do not say that religion will extinguish them, that Christianity was made absolutely to irradicate and to expel them from the present world, and turn a sorrowing earth into an unsorrowing heaven. They are incident to a state of uncertainty, and fluctuation, and the good will share in them as well as the bad. But this we do say, that religion furnishes an effectual support and a true consolation under their afflictions, and that it blunts the sting and lightens the pain of their pressure. It is by reason of the trials of life that human beings are made to feel and comprehend their dependent condition. Man cannot go alone whatever his pride or his skill, he is the least independent of living things. He must have resources, grounds of support and aid beyond what are hidden in his own bosom. He is indeed not always aware of the extent of his dependence. In seasons of sunshine and calm he does not feel it; but the ocean of human life has storms as well as calms; its tempestuous as well as its propitious gales. No one has ever yet passed through life; no one has yet journeyed far in the pilgrimage of life without encountering trials. We cannot escape them; it is idle to think of it. Come they will, doubtless, in varied forms and diversified proportions, but sometimes they come with a crushing force, and when they come thus, man feels the need of something out of himself upon which to lean. Talk as you will about the vigour and independence of the human mind, which enables man to rise superior to the afflictions of life, and triumph over them, if there be any such thing it is but another name for stupidity and insensibility; for the most part it is but a dream, and a fiction.

In such circumstances man goes out of himself for help. One will go in this direction, another will go in that. Sometimes the child of sorrow betakes himself to the cares, and anxieties, and to the occupations of business, to drive away distressing thoughts; sometimes he flies to intemperance to get rid of his thoughts; sometimes to giddy scenes of worldly pleasure where excitement and dissipation lead on to sin, amidst boisterous revelries and mirth, seeking something to amuse the spirit and wean it from its sadness. Here then, child of many sorrows and many weary thoughts, the Gospel invites you; it appeals to your sense of need, to your sense of dependence, it presents you in Christ a sympathising friend, one who can feel for human sufferings and allay and soothe them; One who when the waves run highest will say—"Peace, be still," and there shall be a great calm, for He it is whom the winds and the waves obey. By the representations it makes of God's compassionate care, by the views it gives of the intentions and purpose of the evils of life, by the connection it points out between the present and the future, by the relation in which it places man with respect to God, that of a child to a parent; so that the Christian man may claim the protection of a heavenly Father by those divine aids, which God alone can grant—and which the Gospel assures us He will grant to every one that seeks them—by these means the religion of the Bible commends itself to suffering humanity as the very provision which we need.

But there is one other source of uneasiness which the Gospel alone can redress. Man has a futurity to encounter, a future tribunal, a future state. And Christianity comes to him in relation to this, his destiny, as an heir of immortality. You know that you are mortal; the most profane and careless among you know that. You may dread the thought of dying, you may dread the thought of living for ever, for annihilation has no charms except as a protection from a greater evil. If you are impenitent you will not deny that the thought of dying is a distressing and painful thought. You cannot well reconcile yourself to it, in fact, you shrink away from it, and will not entertain it, because it is calculated to embitter your existence. Well, but you know nevertheless that death is coming, slowly perhaps, quickly perhaps; but whether slowly or quickly, certainly and inevitably. In a very little while at furthest, the hour will be here which will teach you *practically* what it is to die; and it is an uneasy and painful conviction if you are not prepared for that hour. All is dark beyond it. The soul flits away, whither you know not; what its destiny is you know not; but it is something that awakens apprehension and creates alarm.

But why not, I ask, rid yourselves of this uneasiness, of these painful and distressing thoughts? There is an effectual remedy for them; ample redress for them in the hope which the Gospel inspires; a hope that maketh not ashamed; a hope that shall never be disappointed. The anxious and trembling spirit sighs whenever it thinks of death and of the dark mysteries that lie beyond, and it looks round for some ground and basis of hope, for some rock of confidence to stand upon. Why not assume and hold fast the position of the Christian who can say—"I know that when my earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved I have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"?—"Lord, now lettest thou Thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation." The Gospel comes to you with this provision for the future. You see and feel and know that it is the very provision that the troubled spirit wants. It is one that is offered to all and accessible to all. "Whosoever will let him come."

This, then, brethren is my appeal to you this morning, an appeal grounded upon the acknowledged and felt necessities of your nature and upon the adaptation of the Gospel to ease and to heal these miseries. It is indeed "balm in Gilead," and whosoever will let him take of it. The call is echoed back by your own deep convictions, by your profoundest sensibilities, by your wants, and hopes and fears. And under their urgency can you offer any plea for rejecting a call which the heart can approve, which your wants and your fears can justify. Nothing within the compass of human pursuits, nothing within the compass of God's great universe can stand in competition with those interests which the Gospel of Christ urges upon you. On the contrary, everything around you and above you, every conviction, every feeling and sensibility within you, all the fleeting things that time presents and all the enduring realities which eternity has in store, combine to impress upon you the necessity of making these interests your first and great concern.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 38.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF WINCHESTER,

(*SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, D.D.*)

PREACHED AT CHRIST'S CHURCH, BLACKFRIARS ROAD,
LONDON.

ON ASCENSION DAY, MAY 9, 1872.

"*And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.*"—Acts i., 9.

"*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*—Daniel vii. 13, 14.

We have read both these passages in this morning's service from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, as appointed to be read for the epistle of to-day, and the prophecy of Daniel as appointed for this morning's first lesson. I have taken the two together, to speak upon for a few minutes to you on this blessed day for this reason: that the one of these gives the earthly and the other gives the heavenly side of that which we to-day commemorate. The book of the Acts of the Apostles gives the earthly side, what the Apostles saw; the wonderful end of that forty days, the renewed communication between them and their blessed Master through those days from time to time by a law unknown and undiscoverable to them. He was with them, and He vanished from them. He stood amongst them, and He left them alone. Now the invisible, colourless air revealed suddenly, while the door was locked, the beloved form and features to their astonished gaze; and again, at once, with all of them gathered round Him, with the intenseness of loving attention He vanished from amongst them and they saw Him no more. The forty days had come to an end. The "little while and ye shall see Me" had run itself out. The time had come of which more and more clearly He had spoken to them when He had said "I shall go to the Father," and as though foretelling them of the mighty close, He gathered them upon the mountain height, apart from the possibility of fraud, apart from all possibility of error; the bare hill and valley and the sky above them was all upon which their eye could rest. No conceivable misapprehension possible; no sudden storm scattering their attention and then passing away to leave them alone; but the calm air of that Judean country, upon the bright hill with the light clear, still and liquid, with the air breathing softly from the neighbouring sea, with that gathered circle listening as perhaps they had never listened before to the word of blessing as He spoke it, and to the syllables of prophecy as He dropped them, every attention of body and mind concentrated upon Him, and He close beside them. The mystery was accomplished. He rose from amongst them, and as they speechlessly gazed they saw Him ascend into the sky above until the mantling cloud hid Him from their sight. "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight."

And still, my brethren, the cloud hangs; still it intercepts the gaze of those who upon this earth are looking up to Him. Still the cloud-canopy is drawn. Twice only has it opened its veil to show to eyes upon earth what is going on in heaven; once for the support of dying Stephen, the first of martyrs; once for the conversion of St. Paul the Apostle, the persecutor of the disciples. Excepting these times the cloud has remained drawn; the earth has seen Him no more. Still the scene is that of waiting expectation, adoration and desire—still the gaze of the Apostles beholding Him as He was taken up whilst a cloud received Him into heaven.

But what of the other cloud, my brethren? Go back to the voice of prophecy and read the triumphant notes. The Apostles write in the book of Acts the earthly side; Daniel, the prophet, saw years before, in that Chaldean land, what was on the other side of that cloud. "I saw in the night visions and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven." There is the cloud again, the other side of it. We ourselves see in the heaven over us the mantling cloud in all its frowning blackness looking down upon the earth, as though it did but shut the light out; but as we look at its upper side we see the heavenly glory streaming into it like the dew into the fleece, and every fold transfigured into liquid fire. And so it was with Daniel. He saw the side of the cloud that received Jesus out of their sight. "One like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him; His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and His kingdom which shall not be destroyed."

Well then, brethren, here we have the other side. He ascended to His native heaven; He went back again to the throne of glory. He was again with the Ancient of days. He was indeed again with the Father, but, mind you, not as when in His infinite compassion He came forth out of that glory to redeem man. He ascends—the man Christ Jesus. The humanity which He had knit into a union, indissoluble with the Godhead, in the person of Himself as the Eternal Son, the humanity mounts now to that throne of glory. That never-to-be-dissolved union, God and man; man and God! He ascends to the Ancient of days, and as man He takes the mediatorial throne. Mark you it is *that*, it is not the throne of the everlasting Godhead. Even though the mystery of the eternity was not yet revealed to Daniel, see how here, as everywhere in the older dispensations, the whole is interwoven in the very imagery of the prophecy—the bringing the Son of Man to the Ancient of days, the eternal Father, the coeternal Spirit, and He the everlasting Son blending together in the Ascension into the innermost circle of the uncreated light; the giving to Him everlasting dominion; and the giving to Him the mediatorial kingdom, the kingdom, mark ye, of all the earth, of all tribes and languages and places, for whom he had shed His blood, to be His for ever and ever, because that mediatorial kingdom passes into the everlasting kingdom when our Lord shall be all in all. Here then, is the glorious side of that cloud which received Him out of their sight. Mark my brethren the points for Ascension-day. First, that our very nature, true human nature, not something mingled between human nature and the Deity, but true human nature in the person of the man Christ Jesus is at the right hand of the majesty of the eternal Father. Remember, the only one perfect man who ever had lived upon this earth! Adam had not reached the perfection which was to be got by maturity before he had fallen from it by sin. And every child of Adam receiving his stained nature is therefore incomplete and imperfect. The one man whose nature was the perfection, which existed from Eternity in the mind of God was Christ Jesus. He lived in the full perfection of the nature which you and I are wearing now in its torn, ruined, and imperfect condition. He ascended then, to the right hand of God and sitteth there, then till now, at the right hand of God in the uncreated glory of the Father. That is the great cardinal idea of Ascension-day.

And now mark some of the consequences God reveals to us as having followed from it. In the first place this was the bearing of the blood of the Atonement into the Holy of Holies. All the elaborate imagery of the old law fulfilled; the Mission of the High Priest upon the great day of atonement accomplished—He who then went once only in the year within the veil with the blood of the great sin-offering that He might make atonement for the sins of the people, and for his own—that now accomplished by Him who went into the Holy place not made with hands, but into the heaven of heavens that He might once for all, appear before the Eternal Father with the blood of the sacrifice once offered by Him to make full atonement for sinful humanity. And then, thirdly, this,—that as upon the great day of atonement the High Priest not only made intercession, but then offered up the prayers of the whole people of Israel who were praying without, so that each man with his own burden, each woman with her own grief in the congregation of the faithful people without, making their own secret prayer, Hannah-like, in the bitterness of their own soul to Him who was between the Cherubims, knew that at that very moment the High Priest was sprinkling the hidden Mercy Seat with the blood of the Atonement, making intercession for them, and that each prayer of theirs, which was breathed without, went straight up to Him who was between the cherubims, because the High Priest was in this way offering the accepted sacrifice for himself, and for the people. There is the figure of that which you and I so need—which you and I may if we will, so blessedly possess. He is within that veil. He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He pleads before the Eternal Father, the blood once shed upon the Cross. No repeating as men have idly dreamed, no prolonging as men have curiously imagined of the one sacrifice—the sacrifice once offered on Calvary in its perfection, neither needing nor permitting repetition or prolongation, but offered once for all for the sins of man. That sacrifice was completed by the great High Priest in the very presence of the Eternal Father for each one, offering this day the bitterness of his own spirit before the Father. And as that prayer was taken up by the High Priest, and there in the accepted place, in the Holy of Holies, before the great altar was offered up for him who was praying it without, so the feeble prayer of this earth—the prayer which in all our feebleness we have been offering or shall offer up to-day, that shall be taken by the pierced hand, and from the throne of mediation, with His own prevailing intercession be offered up for us to the Eternal God our Father.

God specially provided that the great High Priest should be one taken from amongst his brethren, and studious care was taken in every respect to equalize him with his brethren, even provision being made that he should always know the joys and sorrows of married life—a wonderful provision if you think of it, but the meaning of it being this, that he should be one amongst his brethren who was capable of knowing by that intimate acquaintance of community of experience, everything which every Jewish brother could feel—that too has been fulfilled for us in our ascended High Priest. He was made in all things like unto His brethren, sin only excepted. That He having been tempted, should know how to succour them that are tempted. And, remember, you must give to "tempted" not the meaning only we commonly give to it, the having been tried by temptations of the evil one, but having been tried, having had every nerve tried, having had every fibre of that perfect humanity, every single thrilling string of it stretched to the utmost and made to vibrate to the extreme power of its vibration that there should be in Him, having been tried to the utmost, the power of responding to every single sorrow of every human heart which He came to redeem. Just as you have heard some harp, standing silent in the room, when a musical instrument playing in another part of it has touched some note or string of that harp, begin, as it seems automaton-like, to vibrate at the same note, because it answered so perfectly to the note that was struck upon the other instrument. Oh! that the heart of Jesus on that throne of light might vibrate to every single note of trial, difficulty, and bereavement filling every human heart; so that in the midst of the manifold difficulties of life we might know that in things temporal, in the trial and trouble of our own heart, in the strife with sin, in the pangs of guilt, in all the agony of that deeper and more inward life (which is in every one of us, even though it may lie yet unwakened to the sense of its own being, like some deep nerve in the body of any one of us, which slumbers now, but which something may wake up into such an agony of feeling that it may gather in itself the whole of our being,) that in the midst of every trial when it comes we may find in Him this perfect sympathy, for in Him is the perfection of humanity joined to the Almighty majesty of Godhead.

These are the points, my brethren, for our attention, and the practical issue of them, I think, is most plain. First, unspeakable consolation, for each one of us that will lay hold of Him. When we look back upon the sins of a life, sins of boyhood, sins of youth and sins of manhood, and the heart begins to die down; then to look up and see on the other side the cloud, the throne of mediation, and the Perfect Man pleading for us, yea! for thee, offering the blood shed for thee, and so saying again to thy soul, is not this sufficient to reassure thee? Is not this enough to make thee forgive thyself when the everlasting Father hath forgiven thee for the offering.

And these two things must never be parted—perfect forgiveness and God's strength to strive against sin—and then you can never exalt either too much. But if you take alone the pardon, when God has welded together the pardon and the strength, you may come into the deadly deceitfulness of living in sin, and then thinking that because you have certain feelings you are a forgiven man. It is a new life God gives you and the life of peace is the life of strength and the life of calm, nay of exulting comfort, and it is the life of obedience too. And art thou tempted so that thou thinkest thou cannot resist? At this very moment, is there a heart, as there well may be, that is saying: "I know it is enough for most people but my case is so peculiar; I was led into sin in early life and it has become part of me; I have striven against it and strive in vain, I cannot help it, I cannot help it, I hope death will deliver me from it?" Look up to the other side of that cloud, and see the Man Christ Jesus, the Virgin-born, the Son of Mary with thy nature ready from that throne of power, to give thee His own might and in that might of His to overcome thine enemy, and to strengthen Samson-like, thy weakness. No, brethren take the two together.

And then go on with the subject further, for the Merciful One has compassion on us. He knows it is not enough for us to have a bright hope for the future only. Your Heavenly Father knows ye have need of these things; think of the peace this will give us in the troubles of this life if we will but use it. It is like the storms of these last few days. There is a bright sky and the clouds gone, and we array ourselves to go forth into the brightness; and we say, "The storms are past, look how bright it is" and even as we say it there gathers over us a yet darker canopy and there falls upon us a heavier shower. And so it is in this life. We cannot tell whence it comes, when it goes, what may be its shape, what ruin it may work! It may leave us with a heart broken, and with a home void, with love robbed of all its glory, so far as this world goes and only a burden to be borne meekly in a blessed companionship with the unseen for the rest of life. Aye! it may be so to-morrow with any of us. And oh! think of what the joy is for any such as we are, to be able to look through that cloud and see the Perfect Man's heart beating with our heart in our anguish, and to lean our burden upon It. When we have said, and it may be in truth "It is my all that He has taken from me;" said it so that life can never again be the same thing, yet to be able to lean that broken heart upon His perfect love, not in the distance that is between the Creator and the created but in the nearness that may be between the man of Sorrows and the sorrowing man.

Well then, if these truths are what this day is to teach us, let us make them ours. Let us look up—let us look, as having seen, not only the side of the cloud which the Apostles saw, but that too which was given in the night visions to the seraphic eye of Daniel. Let us look up and see Him there. Oh that each heart would indeed mount up and with him continually dwell. What a glory does it add to this life, even, to know how, if you walk with the companion of your heart's love, out abroad into the world of God that every flower is brighter, and every scent sweeter, and every song of the birds more musical and every waving of the leaves more lovely because your heart is walking in such blessed companionship. And can we walk with the blessed Son of Man, can we go abroad into life's joys, or life's sorrows, into beauty, or into darkness, and not have life ennobled for us if we are walking in the blessed companionship which is allowed for us with the ascended Lord. Oh! brethren this is the lesson of Ascension Day, and it should go with us every day, and every hour of our life, that like as we believe Him to have ascended, so we in heart and mind may thither ascend with Him.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. JOHN M. ASHLEY, B.C.L.,

Incumbent,

PREACHED IN ST. PETER'S, VERE STREET, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 1872.

"*She bound the scarlet line in the window.*"—Joshua ii, 21.

We are all of us familiar with the history of Rahab; we remember how kindly she received the two messengers of Joshua, and hid them, and let them down by a cord through the window; and the token that the men gave to Rahab for her after preservation, when the Israelites should come up to besiege the city wherein she dwelt.

Mindful of the fact, that in these early days there were no inns, or houses of public entertainment, and that afterwards when they were established, they were never kept by women in the East; that Rahab received into her house two men who were perfect strangers to her; that her abode being upon the town-wall was selected with special reference to the life she was leading, that the word which is translated "harlot," ever bears that meaning and no other; it seems against all the evidence of the case, to assume that she was only an hostess, and bore an unexceptional character. It is true that in her latter days she married Salmon, a prince of Israel, the grandfather of Obed of Ruth; and so became a direct ancestress of our Blessed Lord, having of course been previously converted to Judaism, and having renounced and atoned for her former life of sin. Surely, with the life of St. Mary Magdalene before us, there is nothing to startle us in the case of Rahab, who at first was a harlot and afterwards was raised to the proud position of the wife of a great man in Israel. Rahab was but a type of many a repentant sinner; of many, whose knowledge far exceeds their practice; of many, who whilst they are living in a state which is unduly lowly, or degraded, bear yet within them, the germs of something, that urges them to aim at higher purposes than at present seem to be within their reach; that bids them hope with almost the certainty of expectation, for the rising of a new day-star in their life and prospects. If there be joy in the presence of the angels of God over a repentant sinner; if our Risen Lord showed Himself first to her out of whom He had cast seven devils; it can be quite within the bounds of probability, that an harlot of Jericho should end her life honoured and respected as a princess of Israel.

But it is not because of this or that particular point in this beautiful story, that I have selected the history of Rahab for the subject of our meditation this evening, but it is because this whole history from first to last is one long continuous parable, in the interpretation of which we read reflected as in a mirror the dealings of God with the human soul; how Jesus Christ has compassion upon it in its sin; how He sends His messengers to it; how He disposes it to receive them; and how He gives a token by which the living soul shall be known and saved at the last Great Day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed. The sinful soul lives in the world, and is of the world, and loves the world; and as Rahab dwelt in the city of Jericho so is the sinner a true citizen of this sin-ridden city of destruction.

The proper name Jericho is derived from a word which in the Hebrew language means "moon," and as the moon is never constant to our vision, but is ever on the increase or the wane, so it has been from very early ages looked upon as no inapt similitude of this world, the fashion of which passeth away. Looking at its physical constitution, what a world of wonderful change it is, and how many and how marvellous are the vicissitudes it has undergone since it first came forth from the hands of God. At one time the land grouped around the poles, produced a "glacial epoch" with a cold more intense than we in this land have any experience of; at another period, the land congregating around the Equator gave birth to the extreme of heat. The changes in climate have been infinite since the beginning of our globe, and slowly, but surely, like changes are going on still. The tops of the loftiest mountains were once and again the beds of a deep ocean, in which no sounding was to be made with the line or plummet. A philosopher of old, looking abroad into the world of nature, and noting this universal change, came to the conclusion, that nothing *is*, but that all things are becoming, that is, are either coming or passing away; and that a "perpetual flux," best expressed the theory of the Universe. The same law of change holds its sway in the world of man. Look too, how the centres of civilization change in the course of ages; how mighty races and nations spring up from very small beginnings; wax great; attain their majority, and then slowly begin to fade, like a dissolving view, from the world's gaze, till at length they exist only in the chronicles of history. Nations like the human beings of which they are composed, have their several periods of growth, maturity, and decline. The grandest monuments of man's labours last but a few thousand years, if from nothing else, the disintegration of the material of which they are constructed leads at last to their absolute destruction. In the works of nature, there is life ever flowing from death, new forms of being flowing from the old, whilst in the material works of man, destruction can but tell its tale of past magnificence and glory, in its successive ravages its moral relates to the past, rather than to the future. Some who have felt this passing away of time and the several states of the world have contended that there is no thing as a present time, or a present tense; that that which is, is in the future till it comes, and from the very moment it is, it passes away into the past. The moon as seen by us then, in its various phases is no far-fetched similitude of this universe of change; whilst the city of Jericho as signifying the waning moon was a most fitting abode for a soul that was living in sin.

It was by a proper dispensation of Providence, that "Rahab the harlot" should dwell in Jericho; for sin in its various phases, is a missing of the mark which we all ought to aim at in life; it is a diminishing of our faculties, and powers, and possessions; it is a condition of unstable equilibrium, for the waters of the sinful soul are ever casting up mire and dirt, "there is no peace saith my God to the wicked;" and the end of sin is nothingness and vanity. But Rahab though an "harlot" living in Jericho, was not altogether evil; she was kind-hearted; she had many earnest longings after a higher and better life, than the one which she was living then; she had a kind of prophetic instinct of what the end of Jericho would be; she had a lively care for the welfare of her parents, and of her brothers and sisters. The word "Rahab" is more properly "Rachab" signifies "large," and is a name which is rightly given to one who is being enlarged in soul; to whom every day wider, and better, and truer views of life were opening out. Many would have lived in Jericho all their lives, and looked for, and desired nothing better than the house of the harlot on the wall of the town. It is thus that so many souls sink down into a narrow, hopeless, unsympathetic state; living in twilight, and it may be acting up to that light, but never seeking for the full light of day; kept by the power of God from falling into outward deadly sin, and yet without knowledge of the higher life, of that leading by the Spirit of God which causes us at length to become His true sons and daughters. We are content to dwell in Jericho a failing world, without ever caring to realize in our hearts that new life of Jesus Christ which can alone make us victorious over sin here, and fit us for that perfect glory that shall be hereafter. How many of us have fallen from our first estate of baptismal innocence, and the wings of the soul having been injured by the mire and clay of worldliness, folly and sin, we have been content henceforth to dwell in Jericho; to pass away as the world passes away, having no good hope of any abiding portion. Yet all this time our dear Lord has been waiting to lift us up from an estate so ignoble; He has been knocking this long season at the door of our hearts; by His Holy Spirit He has been urging us to arise and shine by our good works and holy life, for He our light has come, He, who by His own brightness makes all things bright. Rahab was meant for something better than she had been; not to live all her life upon the walls of Jericho, and therefore does her name rightly signify "enlargement." Sin narrows us; grace expands us; sin contracts our affections, and sympathies; our powers and our motives; whilst divine grace enlarges the boundaries of human feeling, it strengthens our every faculty for the exercise of good and it infuses within us new motives for action which are full of hope. David, great and holy man as he was, knew and felt the need of this spiritual expansion of which Rahab was a representative. "I will run," he said, "the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psalm cxix, 32). It is one thing to creep and crawl in the way of God's commandments, serving Him tardily and with a half heart, and another and quite a different thing, to run and hasten in the way of His precepts; to love to keep them and to count such obedience to be a chief joy. This earnestness in obedience, this diligent seeking after holiness, can only arise when our heart is enlarged by the indwelling presence of God the Holy Ghost; which cannot be said to constitute a part of our rightful heritage in this life, but is rather a special visitation of God which He vouchsafes to grant us when and how it seems good to Him to do so. When the heart is so graciously enlarged then "they that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary" (Isaiah xl, 31.

All the servants of God have this expansion of soul, when the mighty mysteries of the kingdom of God have been brought home to them by their earnest work for God in the kingdom of man. St. Paul writing to the Corinthians, and feeling for them as if they were his children, and telling them of some of the efforts he had made on their behalf, exclaims, "O ye Corinthians, our heart is enlarged;" (2 Corinthians vi, 11.) for sympathies which were once tied down to a few, at length range throughout the world and extend themselves toward heaven.

Now there never was an earnest soul, longing for its expansion, yet weighed down under a sense of sin, and feeling the burden of penitential sorrow, but what in some way or other has received a visitation from God; has experienced some answer to its deep and mysterious yearnings. There never has been a heart that longed for higher and better things, feeling its own utter feebleness and inability to procure hope and help from its own powers; but what God is wont to meet it half-way—aye, more than half-way, and vouchsafed to it some revelation of His power and of His love. The desire to realize the higher life; the walk of faith, may have burned in the heart of a lowly outcast like Rahab of Jericho; or it may have been kindled in many a breast more worthy than hers was to partake of His inspiration. In the higher walks of this world's life; amid all the successes and the splendour of this present life, there are multitudes whose inner natures, like the still waters of the pool in the Gospel, are waiting for the visitation of the angel to come down and "trouble" them; to infuse into them a new life or a new and a better spirit. There are multitudes, not of broken-hearted ones alone, but of those who feel themselves to be capable of more than they have as yet accomplished, of attaining to a higher degree of holiness; of gaining an insight, clearer and brighter than their sight has yet reached of the spiritual mysteries of the kingdom of grace. God be thanked that there are such in the world; men and women who know that they are the inheritors of powers as yet undeveloped; of grace which at present they have not gained. The strivings of Divine grace with a heart that has become all but dead through long habits of sin and forgetfulness of the invisible world by which it is surrounded, is one of the sublimest portions of that mysterious economy by which God the Father, through our relationship with His dear Son has united us to Himself. To Rahab these messengers were as prophets ushering in a new dispensation of things, and when they went away from her, they did not leave her as they found her, for they had filled her with new hopes and encouragements and they left behind with her, their "token for good."

To us it is a fact of deep significance, that these two men came from Joshua which is but another form of the name of Jesus. To us their coming to the soul of which Rahab was a similitude, is a significant realization of our Blessed Lord's promise that He would not leave His children—the sons of men—orphans, but that He would send the Holy Ghost to comfort them. The heart of Rahab was an epitome of that land of Promise which these messengers of Joshua were sent to explore. What Rahab told these messengers was reported to their lord, and upon their report he founded his plans. So does the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ descend into our souls, to explore the land of our inner being; to note all its strength; to chronicle all its weakness; to test its every feeling; to find out exactly what relationship it stands in with regard to Himself. These inspirations are as spirits who search all things, that our weakness may be perfected in our Saviour's strength ; and our diseases may be cured by His manifold gifts of healing. Of such inspirations, of such heavenly visitors and ministrants we may well ask, " With what body do they come ?" and the answer is, by various modes and under different forms. A portion of Holy Scripture read, a prayer uttered in Church or at home, a word spoken by God's minister; a special act of love, faith, in obedience at the Holy Communion ; a sudden sorrow or calamity, a bestowal of some great and signal mercy or blessing ; a loss of some one whom we hold most dear ; each or any of these things, and others which we cannot now mention, may be to many a soul amongst ourselves, what these two men were to Rahab ; coming to us from our Saviour, as they came to her from Joshua, as the head of the Lord's chosen people. " There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification " (1 Corinthian xiv, 10).

We remark further how Rahab treated these messengers whom she received. She " brought them up to the roof of the house." This according to the Eastern customs was the place of honour and respect, and this fact shows us in what esteem they were held by her. The best place that she had she gave up to them. So should God's messengers be treated by ourselves, when He sends His inspirations into the house of the soul. We should treasure them up, make the most of them and assign to them the seat of honour in our hearts. How often, alas ! is our conduct the very reverse of this, for if we do not quench the Holy Ghost altogether we give Him but a most inferior lodging. He is not the first in our affections, or our wills, or our understandings; many things are loved and cherished before the holy thought; our wills are all too undisciplined to be in subjection to His rule, and whilst our earthly knowledge and learning exercises our understandings so keenly, we have but little time to bestow upon what is heavenly and divine. Hence the pleadings innumerable, and strivings manifold, of God's Spirit with man's Spirit which are all in vain; hence when the " still small voice " speaks to us in its gentlest and most persuasive accents, we either listen with hearts unmoved, or we seek to drown that voice in the noise and tumult of this world's busy life. We, I say do this. We, who are neither publicans nor outward sinners, nor heathen harlots like this poor Rahab was. We, who are baptized in Jesus Christ. We, who feed on Him, our Living Bread, and we who drink that cup of the new covenant which He shed for the remission of our sins. These inspirations from our Joshua—our Jesus, are as our ministering Angels sent by Him to guide us by grace now and onwards to glory hereafter.

Rahab also guarded these messengers very carefully from receiving any harm, she cherished and protected them, as well as did them honour. Their life was in great danger and jeopardy, for the King of Jericho sent unto Rahab saying, "Bring forth the men that are come to thee," (Joshua ii, 3) but she "hid them with the stalks of flax which she had laid in order upon the roof." So should our secret promptings for good, our holy inspirations and messengers be concealed from the malice of the King of evil, who bids us yield them up to him ere ever they reach the mansion of the soul. "Bring forth" is his cry, "Bring forth," I will examine them for you. I will soon convince you how worthless and how untrustworthy they are. Mark the discrepancies in the Holy Gospels, look at the errors which from time to time have crept into the Church, take a fair survey of the divisions of Christendom, see how multitudes of Christians live; believe only what you can understand, and by no means sacrifice a present which is certain for a future of which you know not the issues. "Get thee behind me, Satan." The earnest soul who welcomes these ministers of God, prevents all such consequences as these, by holding his own in quietness of spirit, for to him "the Kingdom of God cometh not with observation"; therefore he treasures up in secret, each and the slightest token of his Saviour's converse with him, he knows and feels full well the weakness of his defence in case of attack; and so, like David of old, hides the word within his heart that he may not sin against God.

And Rahab knew too, that she could not keep the messengers for any length of time in their place of concealment, "so she let them down through the window." Inspirations are not to be cherished within the soul only, but they are also to turn to practical good in the ordering of our life, in the service which they enable us to render to God, in short our faith must be manifested by our works. Rahab bid her messengers get "to the mountain," we must bid our messengers ascend the mountain of perfection as far as we are able, that men may see our works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All our holy thoughts must be loving thoughts, and all our works that proceed from them, must likewise be performed in a loving spirit. Love is represented by the cord by which the men were let down, for as it bound their bodies together, so should the loving thoughts of the soul find their true expression in deeds of love, and bind heart to heart and help forwards the communion of saints.

Lastly, when the enemy came against Jericho and the trumpets were blown and the walls laid low, all the good service of Rahab would have availed her not in the general destruction, had not the "line of scarlet thread" been seen "in the window." When the time of trouble came, it consecrated and made effective all the past service; had this "token for good" been wanting, Rahab and her family would have perished at the fall of Jericho. That was the sign when the besiegers came, and they knew it and respected it; and as Noah and his family were those who alone were saved at the deluge, so Rahab and her family alone were spared when Jericho was taken by the Israelites.

Joshua coming up into his promised land is but prophetical of Jesus—the true Joshua—coming up at the last great day, to take possession of that heavenly Canaan of which the earthly Land of Promise was but a dim forshadowing; then will He come as the King of Glory, with all the majesty of His Father surrounded by His Holy Angels. Then, when all the inhabitants of the world will be gathered together at that dread Judgment Seat, will be fully known the power of His most Precious Blood, which not only procured our reconciliation with God, but which purified our every thought, word and action during our time of probation and sojourn in the flesh.

The world's history, opens with a shedding of blood, at the world's end it will be our glory and our protection to have that scarlet thread for our sign and our token. Blood at the beginning and blood at the end of the present economy of the universe; but the first blood cries for vengeance, whilst the last blood seals a pardon and tells of a mighty deliverance, for the Blood of Jesus "speaketh better things than that of Abel."—Amen.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 39.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

LORD BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH,

(W. C. MAGEE, D.D.)

PREACHED AT ST. PHILLIP'S CHURCH, REGENT STREET,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, MAY 19, 1872.

(On behalf of St. Peter's Orphans Home.)

"And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him."—Luke ii, 25.

We celebrate to-day the coming of the Comforter. We keep in memory to-day the fact that just and devout men long ago on the first Whitsuntide of the Church were consoled by the fulfiling of the promises of their Lord. We call to mind how the Church, after her forty days of anxious and possibly fearful and doubting expectation received at last her assured comfort by the coming of the Holy Ghost. We have heard how with signs and with miracles, and with the rushing sound of mighty winds and with the gleam of fire the Comforter came to dwell in the Church for ever. And we have rejoiced with those devout and just men as with their hearts strengthened by the fulfilment of their Lord's promise, and filled inwardly with the might of the divine spirit they went out to do the work of their Lord in the world.

And we rejoice not only with them but for ourselves also, because we rejoice to know that this Divine Comforter is with us still in all the power and in all the fulness of the first Pentecost. We rejoice to know that He is in the Church for the very same purpose now as that with which He came then to bestow upon us the two great gifts which He brought with Him then to the Church—light and life. The light that reveals to us the Christ; the life that imparts to us the Christ. The light of revelation, the fullest and clearest revelation that is to us the outshining of the Incarnate Word in this book, and the life of inner sanctification, that is or ought to be, and at least may be for every one of us the indwelling within us of that Incarnate Word. The light that reveals to us our Father in heaven; the life that enables us to realize our sonship to that divine Father. This is the meaning of the presence of our Lord in the Church, the presence of Him who not only assures us of, but realizes for us, the promised presence of our Lord; who brings us into nearer, closer, more real communion and union with Christ than even those disciples had in the days of their flesh and His. The Spirit of Christ abiding in us and in His Church still, is the very "consolation" of His Church. And we rejoice not only for the Church, but for the world without the Church, because even for those who believe not, nay, even for those who never had an opportunity of believing, we hold that the coming of the Comforter of the Spirit of Christ into this world, was the beginning of that kingdom of Christ in the world, of the body of Christ His Church, which, however feebly and imperfectly, is still really and lovingly doing the works of Christ in the world—doing His works of mercy and of healing even where she is not suffered to do His work of converting and convincing the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; inducing by works of mercy, even where she cannot, as yet, by words of conviction, unbelievers to draw near to Christ, therefore for the Church herself and for the world as well, we rejoice on this Whit-Sunday in the coming of the Holy Ghost.

And I have, this day, to speak to you on this subject with a special and specific object, to induce you to help in a work of Christ in the world. I have to-day to speak to you of the Spirit who not only reveals the Father to us, but assures us of our sonship to our heavenly Father, and in doing so to entreat you in the name of the Father to help those who are left desolate and orphans here amongst you. And so whilst speaking of the great mystery which we this day celebrate, and of the work that the Holy Spirit has to do, and is doing, in the world, I might also speak of the tests by which we may ascertain, each one for himself, whether we have been the subjects of the Spirit's work.

But there is another point of view with respect to this coming of the Holy Spirit, more immediately suited to my subject, and that is, not the work of the Spirit or the manner of the work, but our need of it. Let me therefore, in pleading for the needy, speak also of your needs and mine, and of how God has fulfilled them in this work of the Holy Spirit. Let us then see why and how it is that devout men do surely need the consolation and the comfort that is given by this coming and dwelling amongst us of the Holy Spirit, by this light that reveals, and this life that quickens. Is it the case that just and devout men, men righteous in aim and in purpose, and desiring to serve God—is it the case that they need the consolation which we believe they do and may receive from this coming of the Holy Spirit? Let us ask this question distinctly, because we must not forget the fact that there are many who tell us that just and devout men need no such consolation. There are many who tell us that just and devout men would be happier, that they would be wiser and better, and more devout without the revelation that we this day say we have received, without those supernatural influences which we allege are at work in Christ's Church. Nay, we are told that they and we ourselves really are without these; that all we say of these is but a vain delusion, that the Book which purports to tell of them is but a collection of fictions, that the life which the Spirit came to reveal is but a legend, that the teaching which followed upon that life are but the forgotton, or all but forgotten and pedantic reasonings of a bygone age, and all that we Christians call distinctive in our faith and in our hope, so far from being a consolation and a help to righteousness is but a hindrance to it, a gloomy and pernicious superstition, the removal of which would in very deed be a great consolation and boon to just and devout men.

Let us then for a few moments to-day in all fairness, try to discover whether, if this Book were removed, at least as an authoritative revelation, from amongst men, if it were not in any authoritative sense the utterance of His Spirit, if holy men of old had not spoken as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—that all the evidences of our Christianity are but the fictions of a dream—let us just ask then in what position would the Church at large, and specially in what position would just and devout men find themselves with regard to this matter of consolation. Would they be happier and fitter to serve God in consequence of this change? It is a very vital question you see that concerns us all.

And in the first place, let us suppose this Book divested of its authority and all the facts it contains put away; there is then—if we may say it without a shudder—there is then for us no Christ, as we know Him! No Holy Ghost as we acknowledge Him to-day! No Bible, as we Christians take it to be! What, then, becomes of the just and devout men emancipated from all these presumed superstitions, these fears and gloomy difficulties of Christianity? Let us acknowledge at once, frankly and fully, that there would be just and devout men, even in that case. It were a fatal error, it were a grave injustice to deny that many of those who refuse to accept Christianity are men just in their dispositions and aiming, according to their light, at the service of God. But let us ask in what position would such just and devout men find themselves as regards comfort, and as regards the privilege of serving and worshipping God? A just and devout man without a revelation. A just and devout man without a revealed Saviour. A just and devout man without a guiding and aiding Spirit of God. A just man who desires to be devout, but who has to govern his ideas of the God to whom he is to be devout, not from any distinctive utterance of that God, but from what he himself, by his reason or conscience can gather from his own nature or from the world around him. A Deist just and devout looking out upon the world which he believes God has made, looking in upon himself whom he also believes God has made, and trying from THAT to obtain his ideas of a just God whom he ought to worship. What will that man see within him? A testimony to this, that he himself should be just, and therefore the Being whom he worships should be just. This he will find even without a revelation. What then? He looks out upon the world which that Being has made, and which he is to believe that Being is ruling, and what does he see there? What evidence does he find there as to the nature of this Being who has made him and it? What reason does he see there that he should worship that Being? Does he see in the world around him the distinct evidence that He whom he supposes he ought to worship is a just God? Unhesitatingly we answer no! Unaided by revelation he sees in the world not the evidence of a just God, but much reason for regarding Him as an unjust God. What is it he sees? He sees wealth, happiness and comfort on one side; and he sees poverty, misery and pain, on the other, distributed with a seemingly strange capriciousness, certainly without reference to the merits of those to whose lot they fall. He sees an evil man prosperous and he sees a virtuous man wretched and miserable. He sees one man born with a sickly frame to a life of sorrow and sadness, and he sees another born to robust health with all its enjoyments. Or worse than this, he sees tyranny and overmastering wrong triumphing over suffering virtue. He sees the strong oppressing the weak, and the weak crying out in vain against the injustice of the strong, and all this going on from year to year and through century after century. He sees and knows that it has been ever so, and he asks; "Is it just that one man should be rich and another poor; that one should be strong and another weak; that one should be wronged and trampled on by another; and is there to be no retribution, no moral government, nothing that is to set all this right?" And what answer will he get without this revelation? Absolutely nothing whatever to tell him that the Ruler and Maker of this world is *just*. And he asks; "Has then, the Maker of this race of men turned them, as it were, loose upon this world to be the subject of the caprice of events, or the tyranny of oppressive laws? Has He said nothing in all those centuries during which His children have been in the world in this state of seeming injustice and suffering, to explain to them the mystery of their position?" No, says he, this Book you bring is but the guessings of good men; it is not the word of the Living God. There is no word from the Father to His children. No hint as to what may throw some light upon the mysteries of their position. No other world in which God will set right the things which seem so wrong in this. No life after this in which the inequalities and seeming injustice of this may prove to be the working out of a great plan in which justice and right shall triumph at last. No, not one word of this. In all nature there is not a hint at a resurrection. In all the laws that govern the universe and mankind there is not one that seems to be working out the certainty of another and a better life. Nothing to tell of the consolation, and the hope of another world. Where is the just man to see the evidence of the justice of the Father whom he strives to believe in—the Father who has made him and then deserted him—the Father who has sent his family into this world and decreed that they shall be orphans; and that after their long struggle of ages to know Him whom they cannot know and serve Him whom they cannot serve; the wronged and the oppressor, the righteous and the evil, the son and the rebel shall lie down in the mouldering and undistinguishing dust, and that it shall be alike for him who serves the Father, and him who serves Him not? And this is what the just man is to see in this world, and in spite of this he is to believe that God is just.

But to go a step further. In the heart of man there is an instinct of devotion, a desire to speak to the invisible and unseen God, a crying out for the Father his sonship to Whom he dimly realizes—there is in the heart of the devout man, though he be not a Christian, a desire to speak to God, and so he cries out, but there comes no word from the Father bidding him pray. No revelation encourages his speaking to his Father or tells him that his Father can hear him or will answer him when he prays. The revelation within him will certainly tell him just the reverse. It will tell him; It is in vain for you to call by prayers, and by cries, to ask a special revelation, a miraculous utterance from the Father to you, to heal your sorrows or remove your difficulties. Who are you that you should seek to arrest the great course of the eternal laws of the Universe? Be silent, endure, be passive as you may, but there is no room in the scheme of moral and natural Religion for speech *to* the Father, for there never has been speech *from* the father to tell us who made us. Then what becomes of the devotion of this just man? How is he to pray when the heavens above him seem to be brass, and the earth beneath him iron; and between him and the Father so dim and far off, there seems as if it were a great gulf fixed, and that the voice of the Father may not pass across it to him, nor the voice of the son reach across it to the throne of the Father. A just and devout man believing in a just God and yet seeing around him the evidences of an unjust one; longing to speak to, and to hear from the father and yet never hearing from Him one word, or being encouraged, or invited to utter one word to the Father. How long would the justice and the devotion of such men withstand such a strain as this? How long would men be able to retain in their intellectual conceptions the idea of a just, loving, righteous Father; when the facts of their lives and the instincts of their hearts were for ever contradicting the idea? But a very short time indeed would this devotion to the Father remain. But a very short time would men believe in a righteous father who never speaks to his children, or reveals himself to them. Very soon would the intellect and the imagination be at work upon an image of their own creation, and full soon would the doubts that their hearts and instincts raised on one side and the other, eat into and dissolve this graven image of a God, the product of men's minds and consciences, and by degrees the Deism of the just and devout men of this generation would melt away beneath these intellectual and moral influences into the Pantheism and Atheism of the next generation.

There would be then, in this Creed, no consolation for the just and devout. And let those who advocate it say, if they will, and if they must to us; Your Creed is all a delusion, your facts are no facts, your hopes no hopes, your expectations but seeming fancies. Let them say it, and say it with that sorrow which men ought to speak with, when they are tearing out of men's hearts the most deeply rooted and cherished affections. Say this if you will, but do not deceive yourselves by thinking to persuade us that when this is done there will come a millenium of deep conviction, and sure faith, and lasting happiness. Do not tell us that in doing this you are bringing consolation for the just and devout.

But is there then consolation for the just and devout in our view of the revelation of the work which the Spirit, as we believe, has done for us? Surely, brethren, the very idea of a revelation is in itself a consolation to devout men. Surely it is no small comfort to believe that as we have a Father in heaven, so He has spoken to us, spoken to us with authority and with such accompanying credentials as may induce us to believe and know that He has spoken. And what He speaks may well be fraught with mystery, may bring to us many a deep and trying difficulty of its own. But surely the deepest and hardest mystery in this Book were not so deep and so hard a mystery to receive as this, that we have a Father who has never spoken to us. He does speak to us and we hear His voice, sometimes out of the thick cloud, and sometimes with the gleaming and flashing of His lightning and the noise of His thunder, and often with the still small voice of the Father out of the clear sky speaking to us as little children. But always it comes to us with this consolation that it is a *revelation,* that it is the *voice* of our Father. And it comes with this consolation too, that it gives us the assurance and the promise of life to come. This revealing word does tell us as no other words of man, however holy or devout, can ever tell or assure us, that this life is not *all.* It does tell us of another life, of another world that is to set this world right. It does tell us how to understand that the wrongs and inequalities, the injustice and suffering of this life may be, nay are, in His mysterious and Almighty Providence, working out insensibly but inevitably a future of happiness and justice. It does tell us how those who suffer in this life, may, by the patient endurance and right use of the suffering be gathering to themselves hereafter infinite happiness. It does tell us that the carrying of the weightiest cares here may be no injustice, inasmuch as that cares borne rightly here may bring a crown of glory there. It does tell us whilst doing the work of our Father here to look to the end, and consoles us with the hope of Eternal life. It does not pretend to say the world in which we now live is a paradise and that all is right, or that somehow or other in distant ages in this world all will come right; but it does tell us that this world has sustained a terrible shock—a great moral dislocation. It does tell us that things are not, in this world, as once they were, that the evil in this world is not the work of the Father, but of an enemy. It does tell us of the presence of something which is not of us, but which is hurtful and destructive to us—that is Sin, and that as the consequence of this sin all the evil in the world exists. It does tell us of a fall, and the knowledge of this fall removes much of the mystery and the difficulty of evil. It does tell us of the redemption which has come to deliver us from evil, and reveals to us the presence of a dear Father perfectly righteous, and filled with the tenderest pity for His children. It does bid us, in the face of these facts, to "possess our souls in patience," and look on to the hour when He shall create all things new. It does tell us not to look upon this world as the city of God, but it gives us, however far off, a gleam of that golden city whose builder and maker is God, and it does give us a vision of

God the Father wiping away all tears from the eyes of those who enter there. But with those visions of glory it also gives us visions of a terrible judgment; of all mankind standing before Him who is not a Father only, but a Judge; but it also tells us that Him before Whom we shall stand is not a Judge only, but also a Father Who will judge a righteous judgment, and because it is a righteous judgment will be a merciful judgment. But even taking those difficulties and terrors, if you will, we say that they are far less severe than the ghastly difficulties, the gloomy and enshrouded terrors which thicken around the heart and soul of a just and devout man who, believing that this world is all in all, strives to believe still in a just God and to worship Him, against whom his heart is instinctively rebelling.

We thank God, then, upon this day, on which we commemorate the Spirit's work that holy men of old did speak as they were moved by the Spirit of God. We thank God for the assurance of His love and mercy in Christ, for the gift of His redeeming and sanctifying blood which alone enables us to contemplate the sorrows and endure the inequalities of the life we are living. And so we lift up our hearts on this Whit-Sunday morning and thank the Father for this, that in the light of the Spirit of revelation and in the work that the Spirit works, there is consolation for the just and the devout who wait for the fuller and the final consolation in the coming of the King of Righteousness, who shall gather His people together and rule the nations of the earth with justice and with peace.

And thus, brethren, we can set ourselves in the strength of this hope, and in the consolation of this gift of the spirit to do Christ's work in the world. For the other dreary and aimless belief cuts the sinews of all efforts;—Why should we strive so much to put to rights a world that never can be put to rights? Why should we strive and struggle against the inevitable? Why not accept the sorrows and the sufferings of life as the result of great average Laws which we can never alter? This would be the natural reasoning of the just and devout man who contemplates the awful mass of misery, and sin, and sorrow, that there is in the world, without a hope beyond. But, if we are members of the Divine kingdom of the Consoler; if we are in our measure and degree working out a part of the great Divine plan, which one day is to be completed, if we work hard not merely for ourselves, not yet merely or mainly for others, but if we work for Him—for the Christ who has died for them and for us—if we work in faith and in obedience and love for His sake because He has bidden us; if we work not cautiously and niggardly, calculating what will be the result of our work, if we do this for God and for Christ, if we give ourselves single-hearted to the work that He has given us to do with an earnestness and simplicity of aim and purpose and carry them on in spite of their failure, knowing that those works of love and mercy are an absolute duty in this kingdom of Christ on earth, then He will give us the aid of His good spirit without which we cannot persevere long in any work of charity at all in this world.

It is so very hard, brethren, to do good in this world without at the same time doing much, or perhaps, even more evil. All these questions of giving and helping are so mixed up with other questions of social, political, and religious economy, that it becomes often a matter for grave consideration. And then too, there comes often such sad disappointments at the failure of our expectations and efforts, that unless some deeper and stronger motive is infused into our works of charity we shall eventually give them up. Natural benevolence, or particular social or religious theories, never carried through a great work of charity without a deeper, a more lasting and a higher motive sustaining us; and that motive is this, That we do it for His sake who died for us and for them, in the belief that He gave to us the poor as His legacy when He said " The poor ye have always with you," and that He has given them to us with this command, and with this promise, that what we give to them we give to Him, and what we do for them we do for Him, and that the very cup of cold water is thrice blessed, and blessed of Him in this way.

On this principle alone can we practise Christian charity and it is on this principle to-day that I ask you to help the Institution for which I plead, and which appeals to the strongest and deepest instincts of Christian benevolence. It is an Orphanage founded for those who were cast helpless upon the charity or the indifference of the world, left orphans by the terrible Visitation of the Cholera which swept over London in 1866, leaving a legacy of sorrow and misery to the Church, and to this City. It was instituted by one, whose name will ever be remembered in the East end of London for her devotion and zeal in ministering to the wants of the poor and needy at that time of deep distress—the wife of the present Archbishop of Canterbury, then the Bishop of London. It has since grown in dimensions and usefulness, and funds are needed for its enlargement. Those who are doing this great work, plead through me with you this day that you will give of your abundance. And my plea to you is, if you have received consolation give it to others. Freely ye have received freely give. And if you thank God upon this Whit-sunday morning that He has sent His Holy Spirit into this world, to tell you you have a Father, and to bring you still nearer to that Father's presence, then in the name of your Father and their Father, and in the spirit of the Son who came to give Himself for them and for you, let me ask you to help to bring consolation to these orphans, and that you will be as parents to them who, in God's mysterious providence, have been cast orphans upon this wide world.

A Sermon

BY THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON DENISON,

PREACHED IN ST. PETER'S CHURCH, LONDON DOCKS,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 30, 1872.

(On the Sixth Anniversary of the Dedication of the Church.)

"*The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.*"—Revelation xi, 15.

See, dear brethren, what is the consummation of the Gospel, of the good tidings sent by the Father through the Son, confirmed and sealed by the Holy Ghost—See, I say, what is the consummation of all the Gospel—"The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." And see how God worketh in His wonderful mercy. He worketh through man; through man aided by the Holy Spirit doth God work; through man rejecting the Holy Spirit God will not work, even as it is said of our blessed Lord Himself in the Holy Gospel:—"He could there do no mighty work because of their unbelief." Well then, all of us who are hastening on to our end. Aye! hastening on, for what is the longest life here, on earth, compared with the duration of Eternity, and how does any one of us know that our life will be long, or that our time here is not now very short. Every one of us, young and old, rich and poor, high and low, one and all, have through God's mercy a part in this glorious work, a share in bringing about that glorious consummation which is here announced. "The Kingdoms of this world are become the Kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ." Therefore, in every moment of this our little life, brethren, whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. Hath not the Almighty God, who hath done such wonderful things for every one of us, for all who have lived and have gone away to their rest, for every one of us who is living now, for every one of us who shall live on when some of us are gone, and all those who shall succeed us in those unnumbered generations which it may be are yet to come upon the face of this earth before the end of all things; who has promised us such a consummation as this and has made us sharers and partakers in His glorious purposes, who has given us eternal life with all its wonderful glory, joy and mercy—hath not He a right to every moment of our little life? I think I need scarcely go on using more words to prove this, for I am sure, unless it finds its way to people's hearts at once no words of mine can make it do so. But not only has God a right to every moment of our little life, but He will demand an account of the use of that life, especially of us who are baptized into the name of Christ, sealed in the Spirit, born again, renewed again daily, such of us as will let ourselves be renewed again daily in the blessed gift of the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood. I say God has this right especially in the case of all Christian people who have received such inestimable gifts as we have who are "the first." Oh! my brethren, do we not know that the day will come, when it may be that we who are among the *first* here shall be found among the *last* hereafter; when there shall come from the east and from the west those who never heard of the name of Christ, but who have served as they best could according to their light and have tried, as far as was made known to them, to do their duty to man and to the Eternal God in whom, in one way or another they believed—and who shall go into the Kingdom of Heaven before those who have been baptized unto life and yet have not learned to help the Eternal Father to make "the Kingdoms of this world become the Kingdoms of the Lord, and of His Christ."

Now, lest any one should say that mighty as this promise is and full of glory and hope, it is beyond his or her power, lest a child should say what am I that I can help God?—lest a man should say what is my position in this world, look at me, poor, insignificant, mean, having and knowing nothing?—lest a woman or a girl should say what am I that I should help God?—let me urge you to have faith in God's promises. Let us remember what Christ Himself hath said by His parable—"There shall not one hair of your head fall to the ground." Shall we not leave it to God who has made and sealed such promises of protection, to bless the very smallest efforts, even those which seem the most insignificant in the sight of men. Is it for nothing that men are to read and learn how poor and despised and rejected of men Christ was, and all those whom He called to Himself to be His special followers and teachers of the Gospel? Is it for nothing we learn that after Christ's ministry of three years, yea, when He had risen again and gone away into heaven, the followers of His blessed teaching numbered no more than a hundred and twenty souls? How shall any of us, having all things before us—looking at the poverty and humility of

Christ and His chosen followers, and at the slowness with which the Gospel made its way in their hands—shall any one of us turn away from God's work and say—"This is too great for me." God in His mercy prevent it. There is nothing that the least of us can do, it matters not who it is, it may be the poorest and most ignorant child in this congregation, or the most lonely and despised of men, as his Lord was—there is nothing that any one can do in humble faith and repentance, and with an earnest desire to help God in His great cause that shall be lost; it will all be laid up in the treasury of God never to be forgotten; all recorded, all brought to light in the face of men and angels when the Judgment shall come and the Master shall say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Well then, dear brethren, I think I have briefly—humbly I hope, for man's words are at best but poor things by the side of God's word—endeavoured as it is my duty, to press upon you this hope of God's blessing upon you, and have shown you what His message is, how it applies to every single soul, how we may not dare to neglect it if we would save our souls, and how there is nothing that we can do, which if done in repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit, that is not laid up in the treasury of God.

And now for the ways of duty. Men's duties certainly change, not altogether, but in comparative importance with different times and circumstances. The duty of helping God, if one may so speak without irreverence, to do this mighty work of making the kingdoms of earth become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, is always the same; but the manner of doing it must be by overcoming the peculiar temptations and trials by which different times and circumstances are beset. It may be at one time more necessary than at another to give more particular attention and lay more particular stress on the importance of certain portions of that duty. Now at this moment if I were asked what that is to which Christian people in this country should most direct their minds, from the special circumstances of the time, I should say it is to maintain unimpared and set forth in every possible way that they can, the doctrine of the blessed Sacraments. And I say it, first because this doctrine has been much neglected and is still very much misunderstood. One terrible consequence is sure to follow; that, as the Sacraments are the way in which the blessed Incarnation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is made known and conveyed to the soul of man in all its power, so where the Sacraments are neglected or misunderstood, or put on one side, it is certain to follow that people lose sight of that which is the very foundation of Christian faith—the doctrine of the Incarnation. It has always been so in the history of the world. I have not time now, I could not trespass upon your time to prove it, but I state it because it is and has been a fact perfectly well known that the result of neglecting, misinterpreting, and misunderstanding the doctrine of the blessed Sacraments has always been that the doctrine of the Incarnation has come gradually more and more to perish out of men's minds and hearts. Therefore I think it a most blessed thing to uphold this doctrine by every possible means. I can speak from experience on this point as I am now no longer young, but am looking forward within not many years, at most it can be but few, to pass away to my own account. I have lived through a time in the Church of England in which there has been much battle for God's service, not for the sake of contention but for the sake of God's peace. For it is only by striving earnestly and faithfully that we ever can come to God's peace. We may have man's peace, but man's peace and God's peace are different things. Man's peace is mainly based upon indifference; upon thinking it of no importance whether you believe or not this or that part of Revelation. God's peace is based upon accepting the whole of that revelation, in every part of it, and never questioning any part of it as delivered unto us by the Church Catholic, and seeking, as we live in the Spirit, so to walk in the Spirit. Therefore while it is perfectly true that all our contention and all our spiritual strife, if it be worth anything, must be always done with patience, and gentleness, and meekness, it is no less true that there must be spiritual strife always. Without it we cannot help God.

These are times of great spiritual danger; we have to contend with the great intellectual heresy, the teaching which is spreading everywhere, that man can make his own peace, and that, (as many people will tell you) there is nothing to be cared for so much as giving people human knowledge, and that when they have human knowledge they will choose aright for themselves the knowledge that is of God. Is it not sad to see such doctrines as these which are subversive and destructive of all God's revelation taught and spreading throughout this country. On the other hand who can see what has taken place in this House of God this morning and not see, too, that the congregation which worship here are specially favoured with God's blessing—I do not say solely, because there are many other places, thanks be to God, an increasing number of places, where the same things are brought before the people much in the same way, where people are taught in every possible way that they can be, what the doctrine of the holy Sacraments is—but is it not a special blessing—is it not one of the things which you have received of God, and for which you will certainly have to give an account. When we see such things put before people we are cheered and comforted, and we cannot doubt, in God's mercy, that they are not in vain. We cannot see without thankfulness the increased reverence for holy things; so that where some few years ago it was scarcely possible for a priest of God to show himself without voices being raised against him, he now shall never walk abroad without being respected. When one sees such things as these and come to look back, as many of you can look back with me, to the time when there was very little reverence indeed, even in the House of God, and when we see now that the Holy Spirit has moved men's hearts to give up their whole life, aye, and all their substance, and what is more than their substance, all their health and strength, and mind, and body, and heart to place before the people of Christ's Church everything which can move to reverence, to adoration; to the recognition of the great doctrine of the blessed Sacrament of the Real Presence of Christ their Lord, of the Sacrifice of Christ which is there represented before God so often as the holy, the blessed Sacrament is celebrated, and of the adoration which is due from the people of Christ's Church to the Presence of Christ in the blessed Sacrament of His body and blood—I say to have lived to see such things as these may very well comfort and cheer a man, and make him raise up his heart day by day in thankfulness and blessing to God, whatever may be the trouble or the difficulties into which the preaching and teaching of such things may have caused him to fall. Of us who have received, as we all have in one measure or another God's gifts—for His gifts are given exactly as God wills—according to the measure which He has meted out to us will be required of us again. God is thus putting into our hands marvellous and great mercies, and it is all of our own free will and heart, and not by any manner of compulsion that we embrace them, we live in a country where the Truth when it has to make its way, makes it with the entire free will of those who receive it, and not through any terror as in olden times, but with the whole heart consenting, and free and loving. That is the sort of religion which is best worth having. Seeing all these things then, let us bless God; let us take courage and go forward, never having put our hand to the plough, looking back again. Whether we be priests of God's Church, or deacons of God's Church, or bishops of God's Church, or laymen of God's Church, one of the brethren, or one of the sisters, old or young, high or low, rich or poor, having received this inestimable gift of God, and being called to this great mission, let us labour with heart and soul in the cause of God. For are you not all missionaries? You need not go out of this land to hear of people who never heard the name of Christ. Look into your own streets and see the myriads of people which surround you on whom you may every one of you exercise to the very utmost the missionary spirit, and in whose behalf you may become labourers of God, to bring about something less terrible than has been the case in this mighty city; something less terrible than to see millions of people in the very heart of a Christian country hardly knowing the name of their Saviour and their God.

Well then to bring to a close the few words which time allows me to speak I pray you as you love your souls do your utmost to help your ministers. The day is past when idle folly and words spoken by the influence of the evil Spirit himself can disturb men's hearts and make them mistrust the priests of God—the day has gone by when such things can be. You have learnt to trust and follow the priests of God; learn also to help them. If God through their hands gives you great gifts, shall you not do something to make some return to Him through them by whom He sends the gifts? Must not the return come back to God by the same channel as it comes from God to you? Those of you who have the means to do so, help them with money. All these things cannot be done, especially in a country like this, without money. How is it possible? How can you have Houses of God raised to meet the wants of the people? how can you have such services as this? how can you have the true teaching of the children of the poor cared for without the means? There ought to be in every Christian soul a steady determination, whatever their means may be, that a certain portion of those means should be set apart and dedicated the first day of every week to the services of God. There is not one of us that has not something. I do not suppose there is any one person here who could say with exact truth what the blessed Apostle, whose feast we are commemorating, was able to say when he stood at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, and the man lay there, as he had done for many years, asking alms of those who entered. Seeing Peter and John entering the Temple, he asked an alms of them, and he gave heed unto them, having been told by them to look on them, expecting to receive something of them. And what said St. Peter, the great Apostle? "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." The man looked for an alms in money; but he got what was better than the alms, he got his bodily health restored, a type of that which doubtless was about to begin in his soul and of which he showed signs directly, for he entered into the Temple walking and leaping, praising God. I say, I do not think there is anyone here, whatever be your age or condition, who can absolutely say you have nothing to give; besides, do you not remember the blessing on the widow's mite? and do you not bear in mind also that if you would serve God fully you must be exercising self-denial in some shape or degree? You must give unto God something of that which He has given unto you, rather than use it to please yourselves. Funds are urgently wanted for the Christian teaching of the children of the poor in this great district. I ask you then to help your ministers. But whether you have much or little to give, help them first of all by your example. All your giving is worth nothing without your example. "Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Let your hearts be filled with the charity which is the love of souls, and help your ministers with the example of a consistent, godly, and pure life. And above all, help them with your prayers. Never say your private prayers to God without calling down from Him a blessing upon His priests and ministers, and then you will be true helpers of them under Christ Jesus, and then will you every one in your own humble way—for the most that any man can do is but very humble after all—then you will be helping to bring about that glorious consummation of which we read in these words of the Revelation—"The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ."

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 40.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR JOWETT, M.A.,

Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

PREACHED IN ST. JAMES'S CHURCH, WESTMORELAND STREET,
MARYLEBONE, LONDON.

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 1872.

" *Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein.*"—Mark x, 15. Compared with—

" *Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.*"—1 Corinthians xiv, 20.

We are told in the Gospel that our Saviour Christ took little children in His arms and blessed them, and made them a figure of the kingdom of heaven. He was the friend of children, and they, as their nature is, loved Him who loved them. He saw them like angels in the presence of God, beholding the face of His Father who was in heaven, and He denounced woes against those who should offend one of those little ones. They seemed to be the truest of His disciples; to bear the image which He would have impressed upon all men, the image of simplicity and innocence, of that truth and love which form the true type of the Christian character. All men who have natural feelings love children; love to give them pleasure or to do them good. They are the best friends of some of us. We often learn more from them than they learn from us. Their grace and beauty, and affectionateness have a singular power over us. Their voices in the early morning are like the singing of birds in spring, and the little world in which they live seems to be a better world than ours. The breath of evil has not yet sullied them. They have their fancies and their plays, and they take a natural interest in all things. Life so far advanced with many of us has become soiled and defiled by the way, and we sometimes wish that we could go back to their life of nature and be children again. The thought of our own childhood touches us when we remember that we were once as they are now; in the home of our parents who may not be now living; surrounded by brothers and sisters who have gone different ways in life—some to distant lands, where they rest and will no more return to us; and others like ourselves, have been fighting the battle of life here for twenty or thirty years or more, to rest like them before long. The history of any family recalls many recollections known to themselves only, of little acts of kindness done to one another, and inseparable companionships; of old servants and their rare devotedness and self-sacrifice; of some mistakes and misunderstandings too, which may have arisen out of difference of character. We can see now how they might have been avoided, but we would not place ourselves above them at the time. The old family life; the house in which we dwelt; the circle which met around the fire, or the dinner table; the very books and furniture which we used are still present in the mind's eyes, and the memory of these things is sweet to us. They are a sort of kingdom of heaven in the past, and to some of us there seems to be none who can love us now as others have.

And this leads us farther to the thought that these family phases are necessarily transient, and though they soften and mellow our after lives, we must at last rest upon our Father and God. A great poet imagined that he discovered the notion of immortality in the recollections of childhood. He has pictured a child dwelling in the land of dreams and light and seeing everything surrounded with a beauty and glory which in later life pass away; and he goes on to describe the first questions about sense and the things of sense which arise in a child's mind; of his imaginings of a Creator moving about in worlds not realized; of that high instinct before which our mortal nature "did tremble like a guilty thing surprised." The lines are familiar enough to many of us, but we should mistake the use and beauty of such words if we were to argue about them literally. Yet they may suggest to us thoughts which have a literal and philosophical truth. For there is something which we have lost, if we have gained much, in the progress to mature life. There was a simplicity and directness in our sense of truth and love which are often impaired by contact with the world. To do right, we felt, was to please God, and our parents; to be gentle and to speak the truth always. No cloud of impurity or evil, had then darkened our minds. Sometimes we were at war with ourselves or others and would not be comforted till we had been forgiven. Our thoughts hardly strayed beyond our father's home, where we found all things provided for us. We knew no want, neither did we take care for to-morrow. To-day seemed almost a life for us, and many of us prayed more earnestly then than we have ever been able to do since; not having any absolute notion of God but yet maintaining the sense of His infinite power and goodness, and sometimes surprised to find when copying the mode of speaking adopted by relatives and others, that the thought of God did not seem equally present in their minds as in ours; for then everything was real and living in us, and God was our better Father in heaven.

A strong testimony of the real power of religion over human nature is afforded by this influence upon the minds of children. Imparted like other education, it is also natural, and easily capable of being awakened in them. Nor need we fear for real religion in daily life. Who shall despair because of the question "What am I to teach my children in these days of doubt and difficulty?" The world has occasionally gone on without religion for a time, but not for long. When driven out by that corruption which its reaction had produced—as in the case of France at the end of the last century—it soon comes back and takes up its abode in the hearts of men. And in times of perplexity and uncertainty, if our religion is of the right sort and we are setting an example of Christian virtue, its precepts will readily sink into the minds of our children. But if we are leading only a conventional life, professing one thing and doing another—doing it in a way to be easily detected by all the world, then our children will fare but badly for religious education. If we have no sincere religious convictions ourselves we cannot communicate them to others.

Once more, a child is a dependent being who flies to his parents for support and help. They are a sort of god to him, in whose love he never loses faith, and who he believes will never depart from him. He knows them to be wiser than himself, and he pours out to them his little tale of right or wrong. He believes that they take note of the very hairs of his head. He knows that they will not give him a stone when he asks for bread, and that when he asks for food he will not be denied. His greatest pleasure is to be allowed to be with them, and not to be left in the company of servants. He believes they can never do anything wrong, or cease to love and care for him. And yet again, there is another remarkable trait in a child's character. He will have the truth spoken to him. He does not like to be imposed upon by faithless promises or false tales. "Is that story true?" is the question he is perpetually asking, because he is ready to believe what we tell him, and when he is deceived a wrong is done to him which he keenly feels. There are many ideas of course which he will be up to a certain age incapable of comprehending, and therefore he must sometimes be put off with words. He has no conception of the world, or of history; no comprehension of the meaning of abstract terms, or of his own place and position amongst human beings. Yet his life is not altogether a delusion. In his own mind, in the attachment to home, in the power of distinguishing right from wrong, in the consciousness of his parents' love for him, he has hold of realities as firm and as well founded as any he may acquire in after life.

Lastly, the child is looking forward to a future, and to him, a yet unknown world in the affairs of which he will one day have to take a part. When he grows up he will do as other grown up people do and be free from control, and yet of this change which is to pass over him, he really has no distinct idea. He cannot anticipate the time when, at school first and afterwards in the world, he shall enter into new relations with his fellowmen; least of all can he understand the effect of education upon him, or how he is becoming gradually fitted for the scenes of active life into which he is sooner or later to be introduced.

Nor can he see whither he is going. His little life is rounded off by yesterday and to-morrow; he reckons a birthday as some remote but not-to-be-forgotten epoch; the future is in the hands of his parents who would not like to see him harassed about many things which do not concern him yet, and the great source of his happiness and contentment is to be found in the fact that he cannot see what is before him. So, in a figurative manner, we may conceive of the relation of man to God. He is like a parent bringing up his children. The present is the education for that future about which we know so little, and must be content to know only that we are in the hands of God. Ages had passed away before men attained to even this simple notion of God and they no sooner got it than they seem to have commenced the process of losing it. They feared rather than loved Him. They believed that unlike any human father, He inflicted punishment upon His children not for their benefit and improvement, but merely in satisfaction of some imaginary legal obligation or requirement.

God is "our Father" and yet in this nineteenth century the majority of mankind have not acknowledged this simple truth, but have so narrowed it down by sophistry and fiction until God has ceased to be the Universal Father and become the Father only of the few, and hardly even of them. This image of the Divine Father is the best expression we have of the character of the Deity, though I am not going to deny that it is a figure of speech which does not perfectly convey the truth. The nature of our minds is such that the things unseen, must be shewn to us through things which are seen. We know no tongue of angels in which only, they could be described, no Eternal voice that can be heard in space and time, and therefore we have to make use of figures of speech which represent to us divine truths as in a glass only, constantly to be corrected by reading and reflection. For although we describe God as our Father, and as a Person, yet we know that in many respects He is not like a human father or person at all. So although we love to regard ourselves as the children of God, yet in some ways we are not children but like grown up men and accountable for our actions. Like the analogous figure about the education of the world which has been so much used, comparison ceases at a certain point, and we must never use as an *argument* that which is merely a *symbol* for the expression of the truth. The Scripture tells us that we must be children as well as men. "When I was a child" says the Apostle "I spake as a child, I thought as a child, I understood as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things."

So different are the aspects under which the same character can be described. Therefore leaving the figure, I will now briefly consider how these two elements are to be reconciled—in what respects we are children; and in what respects men. Like children we are preparing for another state of things. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." There is an horizon which bounds our view: a cloud of which the shadow intercepts the light from beyond. Still there are certain links by which this life is bound to another. While the sense of life is strong in us, the hope of immortality is also strong. Though we have not any idea of the Divine nature, we have the conviction that this world is not *all*, and that the purposes of God to all mankind are but half revealed. Conceive any other hypothesis of the world and all things are thrown into confusion, and there is no such thing as good or evil in the world. Amidst many appearances to the contrary we can trace the progress of advancement; the process of order arising out of disorder; the certain predominance of good which seems to gain, upon the whole, as time goes on. Even in this world we cannot tell how near the human race has arrived, or may arrive, to the ultimate purpose of its creation; for though we are preparing for a future state, we are but children, with reference to what the nature of that future state shall be. Who shall say what changes ten centuries may not make in the moral condition of the world, if knowledge increases during the next ten centuries at the rate of the last hundred years? And ten centuries are not a large portion of the past, and probably but a small fraction of the duration of human society in the future. There is time for endless experiments, and for some mistakes too; indeed the thought is overwhelming, and we dare not speculate about the changes which are possible. Like children we are picking up pebbles on the shore, and soon our day passes away. Like children too, we trust in God—"Lord be Thou our refuge from generation to generation; Before the mountains were conceived or ever the earth and the world were formed." This must be the end of all our speculative theories: that we must turn at last to God. Some power beyond us is the Cause of all we see; some power beyond us is the Author of all good in the world. We know that we could not live but through Him, and by His Divine laws and orders. We are content to live in the position that He has placed us who gives us our daily bread. We do not lament the coming on of age because we know that this too is by the appointment of God; and though it is natural to fear death, we do not, because we know that hereafter we shall wake up in His likeness.

There is yet a third point in which we really resemble children, and that is in the slenderness of our knowledge. We are ignorant of the causes and principles of life and death; and we scarcely know anything of the influence of the mind over the body. The world around us is a mystery; a book of which we are able to read but a very few pages. We believe that we are governed by fixed laws, and yet these laws do not interfere with our power of choosing between good and evil. One thing however seems to be certain, that we must do right to find favour with God, for this is the whole duty of man. The shortness of life admonishes us that we should apply our hearts to wisdom, and blessed is he who can apply his heart to wisdom to his life's end. Again and again we find that we cannot leave off where we began as children. The substance of Religion is not in theology, or philosophy, or any particular form of worship, but a simple and childlike faith in God.

But by the side of the figure of Christian childhood we must place the other, namely, that of Christian manhood. And here there are many differences. First, we are not simply being led like children blindly and unconsciously but are men capable of reason and reflection. We are not, as I was saying just now, children picking up pebbles. We know what we are doing, and are able to add fact to fact, and observation to observation, and hand down the result of our lives to another age. Astronomers speak to us of our earth as being a small satellite of one of the lesser heavenly bodies, and yet we do not know that anywhere else in the infinite world of space such a life as ours exists; a life with a mind capable of surveying the works of God, and of understanding the order of them. Thus we are not altogether children even when we compare ourselves with the greatest works of Nature, and place man above and beyond them all.

But leaving such great thoughts, and returning to our subject, there are other respects in which the image of childhood fails to convey the true idea of human beings in this world. The child has no experience and knows but little of anything outside his own father's house, whereas to the grown up man, experience is his great teacher. He has the experience of himself, and of others, of society, and of business, and this enables him to walk safely. So in religion no man can dare to disregard its teaching. The earnest desire to do rightly is the great safe-guard, but we seem to require something more than this, the knowledge of our own characters; of our strength and of our weakness; of the power of circumstances, and the force of the sin that doth so easily beset us; and of the deceptions and delusions to which we are liable. Without this there can be no harmonious growth to the stature of the perfect man. We must have observed how closely things good and bad lie in our minds, and how easily we pass from one to the other. One of the latest fruits of experience in the paths of life is moderation; that calm and ignoble temper which sees things in their true proportions, when the heat of passion has subsided and the movement we had expected was to have regenerated the world is exhausted. Happy is he who having that moderation, can still maintain his enthusiasm, making his knowledge of the world not an excuse for sitting down with his arms folded, but using it as an instrument for the service of God and man; like some aged men who seem never to grow old, but retain to their latest day the freshness and fire of their youth.

Lastly, though there are many other points of character, we should be men in our firmness and strength of purpose. Many grown-up persons are like young children; they do as others do; they have no thought or principle of their own; *they take the epidemic that happens to be in the air.* But the greater part of the good which is done in the world is done by those who dare *to be themselves;* who regard not custom or habit, but some higher rule—the law of God, and the good of man; not seeking to divide their lives into two parts so that they may make the best of both worlds, but consistent, upright, free from sentiment and weakness; men not affected by changes or opposition; living in some sense apart from their generation and yet never isolated; knowing all the ascertained facts of history and science and yet not disturbed by them, nor suffering them to impair their sense of Religion nor their determination to stand by and support others; who do not want to be the victims of fancies or emotions but to know things as they really are. The externals of religion are grateful to most of us. The decorations of a church, and the sound of music please both the eye and the ear, and we see with satisfaction the restoration of a cathedral, but many of us feel in our inmost souls that we have need of a religion deeper than that which satisfies so many in the present age. After all the other resources of Art have been exhausted and this æsthetic movement, which is not to be under-rated, shall have come to an end, we still have to stand face to face with the great question of questions, "What is truth?"

We know very well that the success and usefulness of a church is not to be estimated by its wealth and influence, but by its power of embracing all truth, and its moral effect upon mankind. We want a religion not at variance with science or history, to exercise a reforming influence upon the world. We want to hear the Gospel of Christ as He Himself preached it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength, and thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." These are eternal truths which never pass away or grow old, and those who live up to them, whether laity or clergy—and they are quite as likely to be found amongst the laity as amongst the clergy—are far better guides for the footsteps of the young through the difficult paths of life, than any of the mere worldly teachers of this critical and refining Age.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. FREDERICK GEO. LEE, D.C.L, F.S.A.,

Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth,

PREACHED AT CHRIST CHURCH, CLAPHAM,

ON THURSDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1871.

"*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*"—Genesis viii, 22.

These words form part of that solemn pledge which was given by God to Noah, the chief of those who were saved out of the flood, when the waters were assuaged, and the Ark rested on Ararat. When those came forth who were miraculously saved from that outpouring of God's vengeance on the whole world; when the sacrifice offered by Noah was accepted, then God spake and gave a pledge that He would never again punish the world by destroying all flesh by a flood, and at the same time He gave another promise, expressed in the words of my text, pledging to mankind, in general, that the seasons in order, and day, and night, and cold and heat, in their course, should follow each other, to bless and to be the natural order of temporal abundance for men. And that which God promised then, He has most surely and completely performed, so that up to the present day, no year, no period of time, no race of people, or no nation, exists but has known the temporal blessings of Him Who made this promise, which He sealed by the rainbow in the cloud. And as with these temporal blessings, so with all temporal blessings which Almighty God has vouchsafed to shower upon us, they are lasting, they exist, they are, they live; for while the earth remaineth "seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." And these blessings are ours; they have come down from the long generations regularly, steadily, and surely, and we gather here before His Sanctuary to thank Him as a nation, as a people, as those belonging to a parish, as those forming part of a congregation, for His temporal blessings which He has been pleased to bestow upon us. While other nations have suffered, we have been free from suffering; the sunshine of God's presence in His material actual gifts is sent, and realized. Here, there has been no war; here, there has been so much prosperity and success, with greater benefits than either we desire or deserve. We have here, nevertheless, sent up our voice, our earnest voice of praise, that He has vouchsafed once again to bestow upon us a rich, plentiful, and abundant harvest. The sower went out to sow his seed in the spring, and God gave His rains to fall, and His dews were there also, and the sunshine of June was there, and the husbandman went forth to gather in that harvest. God be praised therefore again and again for this His temporal gifts which we should always remember and keep in mind, over and above which we should be constantly contemplating God's unchangeable and unchanging mercies to mankind, asking ourselves serious questions with regard to the past, the present and the future, if we receive God's temporal gifts as we should receive them. So, too, we should always remember that all that grows in the order of nature is from Him, though we act as if God having given us being on this earth, was bound to bless us with the wonderful alternation of day and night, and the marvellous period which makes the earth and living here such a temporal blessing. Do we never thank Him, or do we never fail to thank Him for that ordinary health which is ours, and which is denied to so many? do we fail to remember that He is the Author of that life, and the Giver of that temporal blessing? As of old His promise was "while the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease." So now He gives us all we have, and more than we ask. He gives us memory independent of reason, and understanding, and free will, which make man the greatest of creation, and but a little lower than the angels. Do we rejoice and glorify Him for these (putting aside the religion we confess and those benefits which are bestowed upon us in the Church universal) do we thank Him for these, in the natural order, which are so many, and which are bestowed so constantly and entirely by the Author of our being, and the Preserver of our lives ?

Again, God while He gives us day and night, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, at the same time He preserves us constantly; He called into being all that we see; He hung the stars in space; He gave us the sun by day, and the moon by night, and a thousand things besides which make this earth weary to some, yet beautiful to all. Do we not when contemplating His gifts send up our thanksgivings of of laud and adoration to His throne? He has bestowed His blessings on the unrighteous and unjust as well as on the just; to both alike given His temporal gifts, the good and the bad alike receive His dew; the good and the bad alike reap the result of the harvest of His seed. There is nothing wanting on the side of God. On the part of man there is much indeed wanted, for too often we take these gifts as a matter of course, regarding them as our own by right; in contemplating these gifts we put God altogether aside, and fail to remember that He might, if He would, withdraw at any moment, as He has done in times past, in our own country, and in recent times in other lands, those external marks of His Divine favour and grace, by which we know that He is over us, and around us, and about us, and sees and spies out all our ways. And for ourselves what a lack of faith there is, what a want of recollectedness, how rapid, how hasty, how inconsiderate, how full of the riches of this world, and in our ways and works, what an utter absence of that faith which reminds us of God's presence and enables us to call to mind that He sustains us, and that He holds us up, and blesses us, and that it is He, as in the case of the ocean the waters of which He holds in the hollow of His hands, Who sustains the weakest, who blesses the most impotent, who showers abundant harvests upon us, and who stays and upholds, and guides those who seek Him, and ask His guidance on their heavenward path. Again, what a want of thanksgiving is there. We gather together once in a year at all events—not merely the members of any particular congregation but those that live round and about us, and externally we thank God by joining in such a service as this which it has been our privilege to take part in to-night, and then go away and forget God's mercies even if we ever remembered them in His Sanctuary and at His Altar; we live practically without God in the world, and without realizing His grace and gifts; and yet all the while seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night, do not cease in this our day, many generations after the faithful and changeless promise of God. We do not, I say, in this remember Who has spoken, and how surely His pledge has been fulfilled. And what is here shadowed forth by the inestimable gifts of God, becomes a still deeper reality, and a still greater blessing, and draws us nearer, and makes us more intimate with God in the supernatural order that now abides. If seedtime and harvest cease not, neither do the laws nor the operations of His celestial kingdom. The heavenly Jerusalem is come down upon earth. God is united to man, man is joined in communion with God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Who bridged over the chasm between earth and heaven. There is the work of the new creation which began in baptism. " Seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease."

There are in the progress of the individual soul, as in the progress of the Church, periods which correspond to the spring, to the summer, to the autumn in its course, and to the winter. There are days of desolation, and of sowing, and times of reaping: this is the order of God, these are the laws by which the Church of the Most High is guided and directed, these are the laws which never alter. Baptism is used to give new life, new powers, fresh grace, a beginning with those when there is no beginning before, and all absolutely from the amazing and adorable charity of Jesus Christ our Lord. And after baptism there is repentance, and confession, and absolution; and after these there is confirmation to strengthen us, and the Body of Christ to feed us, and at the last as viaticum, to be with us and sustain us in our final conflict and journey through the valley of the shadow of death—" seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter shall not cease."

These blessings are for the rich and the poor; for every age, and every clime, since the Holy Ghost was shed at Pentecost until the day of the last great Harvest, when the angels shall be the reapers, and when those who have served God faithfully here shall be garnered into His barns. When we contemplate these gifts is there nothing for us to remember with regard to things temporal, and things spiritual, from which we may carry home at least one lesson of these solemn services? In the present year we have been marvellously blessed as a nation, you have been marvellously blessed as a congregation, and not only as a congregation but as units in a great number. And as we remember these, can we fail to thank God that our fields have not been devastated by war, and that our crops have not been wasted, and that sorrow and death have not come into almost every home, and made half of a people desolate—as they are desolate who dwell in the land across the channel. When we contemplate their state and ours, we may find a reason why we should adore the goodness of God that He has permitted us to be free from these evils, when our own sins as a nation most truly deserve many of the punishments with which others have been so sorely afflicted. In the fewest words let me point out how as a nation we are reverting—whether the thing be liked, or whether it be disliked, whether popular or the reverse, whether acceptable or detestable—let me remind you how we are reverting more or less to the state of affairs when the Church of God was primitive. In the reign of Constantine, and before that period children—Christian children—were sent to Athens to learn history and philosophy, and by that were made educated men, and fit for a civilized world. In these schools they learned not the Christian religion because the nation was Pagan, and such a thing as Christian education was unknown. Now mark the change; ever since the time of Constantine, or practically since that time, it has made such inroads upon the world, that it has become that which all know is the special need of those who have sprung from their loins, and now we revert again to that state of things which is beginning and which ere long we shall find out to be begun in the generations that are swiftly and sure to follow —the inroads of scepticism. As with regard to education so with regard to Christian marriage and its pretended dissolution, and to the influence of the Court that sits in Westminster, while the Judge pretends to dissolve that tie which Almighty God has created; for it is said "Whom God has joined together let no man put asunder." I grant we are isolated from the rest of the continent, and that as was said by an eloquent statesman "We are girded by a streak of silver sea." I know we are free from many evils which afflict other countries; but at the same time there is a steady inroad, as it were, of a principle of independence and of rebellion against authority, by destruction of all external influence save that internal consciousness which men pretend to be a sufficient guide for them in this enlightened land of ours; and then I may ask you is not the working out of this principle but the working out of the great principle that has wrought so much mischief, that there is no earthly power which can withstand it? There is already a secret organization which has secured great influence, and which finds a home in this land of liberty, more especially among the lower classes, and we shall be influenced for evil if we do not take heed what we do with regard to the God Who created us, and Christ Who redeemed us, and the Holy Ghost Who sanctifies us. It will be our own fault if we suffer because of our national sins, which rise from individual sins; the sins of a nation being made up of the sins of great cities, and towns, and villages. When we begin to contemplate the sins of a nation, let us always remember our own sins. There have not been events wanting in the world's history (that to which I referred at the outset, is one striking and startling example, namely, the flood). And if ever there was direct intervention of the Maker of all laws with the ordinary laws of the universe, it was when the earth became again corrupt in places and cities, and God waited patiently, and averted His wrath for a time. He overwhelmed the Cities of the Plain with a fire from heaven, and they are known no more; and the utter desolation which exists remains to tell the world that God is the Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him, and the Punisher of those who openly transgress His laws. Another example (independent of the war which has devastated the fields of our neighbours) is that of the great city of the West, which has so recently undergone a punishment marked and marvellous, second it may be to none which the world has known, bringing as great suffering to thousands as the destruction of Jerusalem did. There are men who know the state of the cities of the Western continent, and I have heard one say, with regard to this city, that no one could describe the fearful amount of transgression and the evils to which persons are enticed as they travel or take up a temporary abode in the place. Chicago, which has been punished at all events in a more marked manner than any almost in the world's history, owns a greater population than any other city, of what are technically called Spiritualists, who as we know distinctly and actually deny the reality of the Christian religion. There, too, are others who deny the Lord Who bought them, and teach among other notions the idea of the transmigration of souls, but which have been shown to be false by the marked manifestations which have been known and taken place. It is impossible to deny the reality of the world unseen, and that those who live here for a time of probation live in another world for either happiness or punishment. Here are warnings, if we will only mark them; here are warnings if we will hear them. While God promised to us His continual favours, He expects on our part something more than we have given Him as yet, He says to each one of us "son give Me thine heart;" and while He says this, He at the same time expects us to render to Him those thanksgivings which are due to Him for the temporal mercies bestowed upon us, and that we should "let our light so shine before God that it may glorify our Father in heaven." What work has been done, and what undertaking have we set about to accomplish, on our part to signify to the world that we believe in God, that the Spirit is our guide, and that we seek one thing to come, a city whose Founder and Builder and Maker is God? We do not any work if we have not Him; let us turn our eyes inward and ask God to give us grace and strength. We shall not be judged by our sentiments, or desires, or feelings, but by our deeds, and if we are found wanting when weighed in the balance, ill will it be for us in that great day when God shall give to every man according to the work he has done.

You are asked to-night to do something for God, and to give of your substance liberally according to your ability; and that particular work which is set before you to day as a testimonial of your thanksgiving to God, is to contribute towards the work of providing for the new Choir Organ recently set up. You are not asked to give the smallest piece of silver you can ferret out of your pockets, but the largest, for to insult God by giving the smallest piece you can find is not that which any priest can recommend. You are asked to deny yourself some of the common frivolous tastes, and the means of satisfying such, of the present day; and instead of these to give what these tastes cost you (and I will be bound they are expensive tastes) for the honour and glory of God. God has given you much. How much time have you wasted, how many Sacraments misused, how many opportunities of prayer and meditation neglected! You may have forgotten them. He Who knows all things, He Whose eye never closeth, and Who seeth all, and ordereth all, remembers them all; and in the last Great Day these will be made known to you, and the period in which you neglected Him, and the record of the deeds done to His honour and glory. Do then this work, it is but a small work, it is no great impossibility. In what you give of your substance give freely. "Seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." These may come again for you during a few short years; whether the years be few or many, whether dreary or long, this one thing is certain, that in a day not far off you shall hear the voice "This night shall thy soul be required of thee." And the comfort and consolation of having laid up your treasure in heaven, where moth and rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal, will be a comfort which shall indeed make for you the valley of the shadow of death bright with His presence. He will be near you, and guide you, with His pierced hand. From Him you may hear the words—God grant we may all hear them—"Well done thou good and faithful servant," the harvest is passed, the end of the world is here, the day of reckoning is come; things that were crooked are made straight, places that were rough are made smooth, and the peace of God which passes all understanding is shed for ever and ever on the hearts and souls of the ransomed.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 41.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

RIGHT REV. THE

LORD BISHOP OF MANCHESTER,

(JAMES FRASER, D.D.)

PREACHED IN ST. CLEMENT DANES CHURCH, STRAND,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, JUNE 23, 1872.

(On behalf of the Endowed Schools.)

"*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*"—Philippians ii, 4.

The influence of Christianity as a social power seems to have hardly received the attention that it deserves. No doubt "society," in a highly organized, or, as we call it, artificial state, existed before Christ came, in lands which we call heathen. In Greece and Rome there were to be seen types of a lofty and aspiring civilization. Many virtues which are virtues still—high on the list of virtues, such as patriotism, courage, self-sacrifice for a noble end and in a great cause, were freely, fully, frankly recognized. But yet the advantages of life under these systems were confined to the few—not extended to the masses. It was the day of privilege, of exclusiveness, of class interests pursued with all the narrowness of view, and intensity of selfishness, which such an order of things is wont to generate. And so the Advent of Christianity was at once felt to be a revolution. The strangeness of it awoke for a moment, into something more than curiosity, the idle gossip of Athens. At Thessalonica the preachers of the new faith were regarded as men who were turning the world upside down. At Philippi the charge was "These men do exceedingly trouble our city, and teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive." At Ephesus the cry was raised "This fellow hath persuaded and turned away much people." And Tertullus's charge against the Apostle before Felix was, that whereas men were enjoying under his good government, quietness—the quietness that is always appreciated by those who reap all the advantages of it—this pestilent fellow was a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world. And no doubt the timorous, selfish apprehensions of men and classes like these, were in a measure and in a sense true. The seeds of a beneficent and bloodless revolution were being silently sown; or if blood was shed it was not shed by the revolutionists, but by the maintainers of the old order of things, those who thought that the new ideas must be crushed out by force, by persecution, by martyrdom. There are three words representing three leading ideas of modern society, which have been sadly prostituted and grievously misused in modern political and social theories; but which really are the great ideas of, and have their origin in, Christ's Gospel, whether we like it or not; and these three words are—"Liberty, Fraternity or Brotherhood, and Equality." But what did St. Paul mean when he preached liberty, fraternity, and equality? His idea of Liberty was the liberty wherewith Christ had made mankind free; that liberty in which a man may stand delivered from the dominion of sin, because he is no longer under a restraining law, but in the free kingdom of God's grace; that liberty which delivers him from the yoke of bondage which other men were striving to place upon his conscience, and which enables him to serve God and justifies him in serving God according to the dictates of that conscience which Christ by His act of redemption hath made free; a liberty perfectly compatible in his eyes with order, with social organization, with subordination of ranks, with the supremacy of Law.

And what he means by Brotherhood is no vain illusory dream of a spurious philanthropy, but an incorporation into a vast body with common interests, common sorrows, common joys, so that the growth and the development of the whole is only accomplished by the effectual working of this unifying principle in the measure of every part.

And what does he mean by Equality? Not vain communistic dreams, but the great principle which We are in England even now only slowly beginning to recognize, but which we are recognizing—and which no man dares openly to gainsay, though he may not like its recognition—the great principle that there ought to be no proscribed classes; that the avenues or "chances" in life, as they are called, should be freely opened out for every man; that the soul of the peasant is as precious in God's sight, and ought to be as precious in the sight of his fellow-men, as the soul of the king. I do not mean to say that these great principles are shaped in the Gospel into a system, or formulated into laws. That is not the way in which the Gospel is presented to the world. You do not find a system of theology in the Bible. You must go for that to Canons of Councils, and formal treatises of Divines. You do not find a system of laws codified and consolidated in the Gospel, but you find the seeds of great principles, almost cast at random—if there could be anything at random in a system that comes from God—cast at random in the world and left there to germinate. As in one of our Lord's parables the earth seemed to bring forth fruit of herself, without man's care or watchfulness—first, the blade, then the ear, and after that the full corn in the ear. The Gospel may be regarded as a vast store-house or central depôt of moral forces, the issue of which has not only been, and was not only intended to be the regeneration in the highest and amplest sense of the word, of each individual man, but also of society and of the human race as a whole. And so when these forces came fairly into play, society, which had become first stationary, and then retrograde, awoke once more and took a mighty leap forward. New ideas, all of them of a liberal kind—not of a spurious, but of a genuine liberality—took possession of men's souls and fructified there, and men and women became better, and purer; and prospects opened out even for the classes called degraded, for the slave and for the alien, of which philosophers, in the systems in which they had attempted to re-construct society had never so much as dreamed. The republic of Christ adapted itself to the felt wants of man, more fully than did the republic of Plato.

No doubt there are, there always have been, and possibly there always will be, contrasts, sad startling and painful contrasts, in Christian civilization between wealth and poverty, between ignorance and learning, between degradation and refinement; but we feel that they are contrasts—abnormal unhealthy conditions of life. You surely would not tell me that the contrasts between the West end of London, and the East end of London, between Belgravia and St. Giles's is what God purposed as the issue of His Plan when He sent His Son to redeem the world. We feel that they are abnormal conditions of life which we try to remedy, or at least to mitigate as best we can. In Athens or in Rome these same contrasts were accepted as the natural, the necessary, the normal order of things, and no one was startled or shocked by their monstrous injustice or their intolerable cruelty. "In Christ," with a glorious emphasis cries St. Paul in his epistle to the Colossians—"In Christ, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all and in all." All are children of a common father, and so are brethren. All are members of the same great organized body which viewed from one side, you may call society, and viewed from the other side, you may call the Church—with common interests—common sorrows, and common joys.

One great feature in Christianity, and this again is in direct connexion with it as a social power, is what I may call its pliancy and adaptiveness to circumstances. I do not think that the Gospel can be said to have been found wanting in any great exigency of human nature when it has been fairly and fully applied.

One rejoices to think, and one is justified in believing, that the Church of Christ has always been in the van of great ideas. The Church of the Middle Ages was the only shelter that the poor and needy had from the intolerable oppression of the feudal system. Our great educational endowments and institutions are all, or almost all, due to the Church's fostering care. You in this parish have enjoyed the benefit in your Endowed Schools which, though I do not know their precise history, yet, as I see from the address I have before me, were established one hundred and seventy years ago by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and appear to have been of signal advantage to those whom they have trained.

It is proposed that instead of clothing and maintaining a limited number, to extend the benefits of a sound education to a vastly increased number of poor children, to meet the growing demands of the parish.

And I think this new idea of your schools is better—I do not say better in itself, but better for the times, more suited to the exigencies and requirements of the age in which we live, than the old idea. It is not a principle that is ordinarily set down to the credit of the Gospel and yet it is a gospel principle that the great object which not only statesmen, but all administrators may fairly propose to themselves in the administration whether of power or funds, is to seek the greatest happiness, the greatest good, of the greatest number. I speak feelingly upon this matter. I have had my chance in life and I thank God for it; and my chance in life was simply having the blessing of a good mother who gave me the benefit of a good education; and therefore I desire to see every English boy and every English girl, if it be possible, enjoying the same advantages. There are theories of equality that are floating about upon the surface of society, and glibly talked about in clubs, and places of idle resort, theories of equality talked about by men who never touch or strive to touch the burdens of society with one of their fingers. But the equality one wishes to see is not an equal share in the soil of the country, nor an equal share in the wealth of the country; but simply a security for every man living on this free soil that there shall not be denied to him this chance of making for himself a great and useful career. It was a maxim and a glory of the French Revolution that it opened out a free career to talent. We accept the maxim, though we do not follow the method. We desire to open a career to talent, merit, and industry. We desire to put an end to favouritism, nepotism, and privilege, and back-stairs influence. And I hope the Church will be still found in the van of these liberal ideas. We all feel, I at least feel most strongly, that the Church is on its trial, as everything is on its trial, and I have no fear about the issue as regards the Church if only they who profess Christian principles, are true to those principles which they do profess.

These principles are not necessarily bound up with this or that church system. I do not know but that all that is essential to Christianity, might flourish as well under a Presbyterian, as under an Episcopal organization. The dogmas and doctrines which are vital, I may venture to say, are very simple and very few. Christianity is much rather a life to be lived, a Divine stature to be attained by a Divine power working in us, and conforming us to the likeness of a Divine Person, who is the Head over all,—it is much more this than a Catechism to be learnt by heart in Sunday Schools or a Creed to be mechanically repeated by a congregation in their place of worship. To all that the natural man held to be noble, or great in the conception of virtue, the Gospel has added certain conspicuous graces of its own—purity, humility, charity, self-sacrifice, not merely for what the world calls great causes, but self-sacrifice for the meanest and the lowest. And so the Church like David armed with his simple shepherd's weapons—weapons remember that he had proved and not found to fail—goes forth to its battle with the Philistine.

I suppose no one would deny, whatever the special form of government may be, under which we live, or other nations are living, that this is an age in which the spirit of Democracy is making itself felt more and more. There are terrible perils to society, and particularly to the well-to-do portion of society, if this spirit becomes Atheistic as well as Democratic, and our only safety seems to lie in its being leavened by the spirit of Christianity. At any rate, we must try to confront it, not to be afraid of it. We feel there are perils in the future for the idle, for the selfish, for the wanton the useless. If the decree went forth "Cut them down; why cumber they the ground," I do not know who would much care to plead for them that they should be spared. They have had their day—their opportunity. But concurrently with much that justly causes fear there are great and noble ideas seeking for expression in this age. The coming of a good time is the dream of all. What shall you and I my friends, each in our place, each according to the measure of our sphere and influence, each according to the opportunities whether of wealth or ability that God has given him; what shall we do to make the coming time good, and good for all? We can do something no doubt, by extending the advantages of education; we can do still more perhaps by looking fairly in the face the question—how the people are to be housed. We can do something by utilizing, as you are going to do, Endowments. I know how endowments have been abused. I remember when I was a young man at Oxford how men were often to be found living idle, careless lives upon endowments which the piety of our ancestors had intended for very different purposes. And so I think the true use of endowments in this age is to help those who are willing to help themselves; to stretch out the hand in time of need to deserving poverty. Can you tell me why there is any reason, if only the moral conditions of life are healthier, that the poor should not almost cease out of the land. With wages higher than ever they were, within the memory of man, can you tell me why poverty should still be the degrading, the debasing thing we feel and know it to be. Oh, it is a beautiful dream to think that the poor in purse, are also the poor in spirit, and are near to the kingdom of God; but where you find one poor man who is really near to the kingdom of God, you find a score whom their very poverty has degraded, and turned into men and women leading sottish or profligate lives.

And so, brethren, we are really acting in the truest sense on Christian principles when we are doing our utmost to promote not our own selfish interests, not the interests of the class to which we belong, whether it be the aristocracy, or the trading class, or the class that earn their bread by manual labour, but when we are doing our utmost to promote the common weal of society as a whole. The common weal of society is bound together by a mysterious chain. You cannot see it, and therefore you do not believe it is there. You think by promoting your own selfish interests you are doing the best for yourself; but it is a mistake. Nations have thought that their interests were best assured when neighbouring countries, which were competitors with them in the markets of the world, were under difficulties. It is not so. It is true of society as it is true of the Church: It is a great body, and if one of the members suffer all the members, more or less suffer with it, and if one member rejoices all the members rejoice with it. I have had last week to say prayers in the House of Lords two or three times, in the form I had to use there is a petition that God's Spirit of wisdom may rest upon the deliberations of that House of Parliament, that putting far away all private passions, interests, and prejudices, we may simply look at that which may best promote the welfare of the whole Realm. It would be well if the deliberations of Parliament were always formed by the spirit of that prayer. Oh, that the kingdom of our Lord might indeed come. I am not dreaming of or hoping for the speedy advent of that terrible Judgment Day, when the heavens shall pass away as a scroll, and the elements melt with fervent heat; but my prayer is that the principles of Christ's everlasting kingdom might come and have free course, and be glorified in this world. This world may have a career before it of millions of years, for aught I know; but be it long or short, it would be brighter, happier far, if only Christ's kingdom were set up, more manifest, more mighty than as yet it is: if that glorious vision of the prophet were in any sense realized when He says "for brass I will bring gold, and for iron I will bring silver, and for wood brass, and for stones iron"—this perhaps is already realized in a material sense. The wealth of the land is increasing prodigiously beyond the wildest dreams of dreamers fifty years ago—But how about the rest—"I will make thy officers peace and thine exactors righteousness. Violence shall be no more heard in the land, wasting, nor destruction within thy borders; thy people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land for ever; the branch of My planting, the work of My hands, that I may be glorified." It will be a happy day for this poor world when the principles of the Gospel are not only preached, but accepted; not only professed, but believed.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON NEPEAN,

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 28, 1872.

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?—Luke xvi., 10-12.

The passage, my brethren, in which these words occur, forms the moral of that instructive lesson which our Lord wished to point out as arising from the parable of the Unjust Steward which you have heard read this morning. And although it must be confessed that this is one of the most difficult of the parables the blessed Jesus spoke to His followers, the words I have chosen come forcibly to our aid in explanation of it. Nothing indeed can be more clear than the expressions He makes use of when carefully and attentively considered. "He that is faithful in that which is least"—in the most trifling things committed to his care, will no doubt be faithful in things of greater value. "He that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much

If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon"—in the riches and possessions of this world, by so employing the talents committed to your charge, that they shall be profitable to you not only in the present time but hereafter also; if you dispense not those blessings which have been given to you, in furthering the purposes for which they were given, to the glory of the Giver and to your own eternal advantage; if you have been unfaithful in your trust in the "Mammon of unrighteousness," in the search after those worldly treasures so often obtained by unrighteous means, instead of considering their higher and better purposes, "who will commit to your trust the true riches," those blessings which ennoble and sanctify the soul for ever? If you "have not been faithful in that which is another man's," in that property which was not merely given you by another but which you use for others and know not how soon you may have to leave, "who shall give to you that which is your own;" those true riches and heavenly treasures which are indeed your own, which neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and which thieves break not through to steal? Such appears to be the meaning of these expressions and if, my brethren, we apply these words, as thus explained by the parable to which they are attached, we shall be more and more convinced how true and faithful their application is. In this parable our Lord introduces an unjust steward, and shews by his management as a child of this world, (that is, as a worldly minded person,) what ought to be the conduct of the "children of light," namely of professed Christians, in their management of affairs of higher spiritual moment. Some care is however very needful in the present examination of this parable lest we should misplace the expressions used, and make it appear that our Saviour commanded that which He could not but disapprove. Thus for example we must by no means understand our Lord in this parable (as some have done) to mean the Lord Jesus Christ, but only the master of this steward. Nor must we in contemplating His behaviour suppose that when He commended the unjust steward our Lord intended to lend His sanction to injustice. On the contrary, it is not only shewn that the steward was dishonest but that he was punished for being dishonest, for he was going to be discharged for his unfaithfulness. It is also shewn that he hoped to derive some benefit from his fraud, but that like all dishonesty it exposed him to shame in the end, and involved him in distress. Aware that his conduct would not bear investigation, he was anxious before the discovery was made to gain the good will of those who dealt with his master, that he might, when destitute, be received into their houses. That object he sought to attain by giving back to them a portion of their debts. Some indeed in their explanation of this parable have imagined that the steward being no longer unjust was not to be considered further to blame, but if we look attentively at the narrative we shall not anywhere observe the slightest acknowledgment of his offence, or the least appearance of any change of mind in him. It was impossible therefore that any praise should have been due to him. But though the master disapproved of the steward's dishonesty, he could not restrain his admiration for his cleverness. It was not for his dishonesty that he commended him, but for his sagacity.

It was the forethought and worldly wisdom of the man that he applauded, and it was from this point of his character and conduct that our Lord would have those "children of light" by profession, set their affections on things above and take warning by this man's example. He would have them learn the right use of those talents which have been committed to them as stewards, and which knowledge this man exhibited, though with a wrong application, in order to provide a future home And here let me ask, must we not confess that in every respect the "children of light" are surpassed in their exertions by the zeal and energy of men engaged in worldly pursuits? Amongst the latter there is a dauntless spirit of earnestness in labouring to secure those worldly honours and advantages which they are constantly and indefatigably striving to obtain. Look at those men who are so eagerly desirous to become eminent in any one of the professions or employments they may have chosen. They rise early, take little or no rest, and think no toil too great to attain the object of their pursuit. Their self-denial is such that they will refuse themselves the ordinary comforts and necessaries of life and society. Nothing is allowed to divert their attention from the one great end of their ambition. Nor is this energy merely exhibited for a season; but even long after men have arrived at positions of distinction, how diligent they are that nothing shall detract from the reputation they have acquired; that no other aspirant shall outdo them and deprive them of a maintenance for themselves and their dependants when the time for labour shall be past? Not a moment does the man of the world allow to go by unprofitably if he can help it. Six days out of the seven are not too much for him to labour, but when we come to regard the conduct of those who are called the "children of light" and who have to contend for a prize of such inestimable value, how cold and feeble are their exertions! They find it difficult to keep their minds and feelings alive to the work of religion for even one day out of the seven. They seldom seem in earnest in their search after the one thing needful, and they allow many a golden opportunity to slip by, that they can never recover. We may regret the objects and conduct of the "children of this world," but we must nevertheless admire their activity, and stand surprised and rebuked by their incessant ardour.

And, my brethren, consider for one moment for what it is they toil, and what is the prize for which the child of light contends. The child of this world pursues with steadiness objects which though tangible, are but transient and of little immediate value. The child of light seeks for a treasure that no moth can corrupt, that no thief can steal; and yet with all that, he is often surpassed and out-done by the followers after this world's good. And if so, how true is that observation of our Saviour's that the "children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." But then there arises a question of the greatest consequence to each of us, "How am I to know to which of these descriptions I belong; whether I am a child of light or not?" This can alone be answered by satisfactory replies to such enquiries as the following; "Am I seeking the kingdom of God? Do I regard all things here with the indifference of a guest caring only for the day? Do I commit everything I have, and do, to God's care and blessing, feeling that without this it cannot prosper? Do I use aright God's manifold gifts to me? Do I leave to Him all the events of my life? Is my acceptance by Him at the Last Day, my great concern on earth? Am I faithful in that which has been given to me, the 'unrighteous mammon,' that I may in the end attain the 'true riches?'"

With such questions fairly and honestly put to our consciences, we shall not fail to discover what our position really is. And, how important is that declaration of the Apostle, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we walk in the light as He is in the light; we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." We see then, my brethren, that the purpose for which this parable was spoken, was to incite in us a proper attention to the duties of our high calling in Christ Jesus, and that the activity of the children of this world may stimulate us in the pursuit of that which belongs to life eternal. Do they strive for the things that perish in the using? How then ought we to strive for that incorruptible crown of glory which fadeth not away? Do they take pains for the things of this life? How much more then ought we to labour for our everlasting happiness? Do they fix their minds on objects that live but to die? How often do we fix our attention upon the great and all important end of man's existence? May all and each of you while you deplore the object, imitate the wisdom of the children of this world. Combine as much as possible the wisdom of the serpent with the harmlessness of the dove. Would you enter the eternal kingdom of your Lord and Saviour? Let it then be the object of your lives to secure an entrance, and an abiding place therein. "Now is the appointed time, now is the day of salvation." This is your time for making friends in the manner of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when all else fails, you may be received into the Everlasting Presence; that when death comes you may have your portion in the eternal mansions. On that day, how many who now despise the warnings of the ministers of God, will say, as one of them did say, "Oh that I had before felt the weight of that question. What shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Oh, that I had been awake and had understood this matter and had considered my latter end." Like the steward in the parable we shall one day be called upon to give an account of our stewardship and of the use we have made of the talents that have been given to us. Let then that part of this steward's character which is held out for our imitation, be well considered. The more the difficulties, the greater be our exertions to meet them, and while carefully avoiding every approach to the steward's injustice, let us but imitate his caution and energy, and we shall be rewarded in a far better and nobler manner. You have been called out of darkness into His marvellous light, and you must therefore cast off the works of darkness and walk as children of light. You must become more holy in your pursuits, in your tempers, and in your inclinations, and if you would more frequently turn your attention to that Cross upon which the Son of God was nailed for your sakes; to the stripes with which He was afflicted for your healing; to the blood which He shed to wash away your sins; then every wicked thought would be nipped in its bud, every polluting desire would be sacrificed, and your whole souls, and hearts, and bodies would be kept in obedience to His will.

When, therefore, the busy scenes in which you are engaged, sometimes lead you to forget your true interests, call to your aid this sentence, which the parable contains, "Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward." Adore the wisdom, too, of that gracious God who thus instructs you how to improve the worthless dross of this world into the crown that fadeth not away. Always remember your stewardship; never forget that you are steward, and steward only, of every good gift that has ever been entrusted to you and that for every one of them you must "give an account." Remember, too, the promise clearly set before you that no faithful follower of the Crucified Saviour shall ever be forgotten. The children of this world seek for a corruptible crown; the Christian for an incorruptible crown. Let the latter be the object of your pursuit; and if your earnestness be but proportionate to its value all will be well. Be always in the posture of watchfulness and defence, looking forward to that solemn hour of retribution, when the thoughts of every heart shall be revealed, when the souls of the children of this world shall be banished from that rest they have wilfully forfeited, but the spirits of the children of light, refined from the dross of corruption, and rendered fit for celestial enjoyment, will take their places with the redeemed of the Saviour, as associates of the angels and sons of God.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 42.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.

PREACHED IN ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, BATTERSEA PARK,

ON SUNDAY, MAY 26, 1872.

(At the General Ordination of the Lord Bishop of Winchester.)

"*For I will not see you now by the way; but I trust to tarry awhile with you, if the Lord permit. But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries.*" 1 Corinthians xvi, 7-9.

It is from incidental passages like these in the Apostle's writings that we obtain the deepest and most vivid insight into the writer's mind and character. Amongst uninspired writings it is not in formal depositions or official documents that that which constitutes personal character and life makes itself felt. Few persons, I apprehend, would be found disposed to endorse the paradox of a modern historian who tells us, that the character of King Henry the Eighth is to be studied most advantageously in the preambles to his Acts of Parliament. The great charm of private correspondence, and the one reason which can in many cases justify or explain its publication is, that it is a revelation of human character. In their public capacities, two men of profoundly different character will say exactly the same thing, and in the same way, the truth being, that for the time, all personal characteristics are dropped. It is the office, or the circumstances, or the necessities of the case that really speaks. It is not the man. In private correspondence however you see a man as he is. He writes what he thinks, and what he feels from moment to moment. His enthusiasm, his impulses, his hopes, his fears, his attractions and repulsions are all represented by turns. They are uttered without design, or, more correctly perhaps, they escape from him in spite of himself, and as you read you feel that you are in contact, not with a formal and systematic composition, but with the soul of the writer; the soul in all its strength, or in all its weakness, in all its thoroughness, or all its inconsistency, in all its inertness, or all its energy and resolution.

Now, it is one of the greatest attractions of St. Paul's epistles, that while they embody the great and essential doctrines of Christianity, they also abound in those incidental passages or elements which keep the character and figure of the writer continually before us. It is this which enables us all, but especially those of us who have succeeded in whatever measure or degree in furthering the Apostle's work, to feel towards him as a personal friend, just as if eighteen centuries did not divide him from us; just as though we had him now here with us in London or Southwark, or we were back with him in one of the ancient cities of the Levant.

The passage before us well illustrates this observation. The Apostle reveals his intention to remain in Ephesus until the Pentecost, and thus shows to us a feature of his character, well worthy of our consideration upon an occasion like the present. "But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries."

Now here we have first of all, an announcement of the decision the Apostle had come too, and secondly, the reasons upon which that decision is based. In the determination of the Apostle to remain at Ephesus till Pentecost, let us recognize first, the Apostle's power or faculty of making up his mind in the face of strong counter-balancing motives. There was enough in the nature and circumstances of his life at this time to have made him desirous to leave Ephesus at a moment's notice when he wrote these lines. It would have been easy to frame a long catalogue of reasons, each of which would have exercised over the mind of any man, but such as the Apostle Paul, an almost commanding power, St. Paul, as has been pointed out by a recent critic, had come back to Ephesus from a visit to Corinth, and he had arrived in low spirits. He had gone on account of the state of the Corinthian Church, of which he had heard a bad account, but had found matters worse than he expected. In an Epistle, which has been lost to us, he had ordered that certain members whose conduct had been the cause of great public scandal should be excluded from the Church. The Church, too, was divided by the bitterest party spirit. That portion of the Christian community which desired to retain as much as possible of the old law of the Jews was attempting to undermine the teaching of St. Paul, whom they considered too enthusiastic. Others, although he was a pupil of Gamaliel, could discover nothing interesting in his teaching. Another party refused allegiance in several matters of Church Government, while a fourth section denied all connection with his party, and applied to a higher name for a head, thus showing that they had carried party spirit to a greater pitch of narrowness than the rest. There was also a party—whether known to the Apostle or not it is impossible to say—which denied the resurrection of the dead, and regarded the Gospel teaching as a kind of refined Epicureanism. This party though professing to be connected with the Church lived in open opposition to her teachings. The Law Courts again were constantly occupied with suits brought against one another by litigious members of the community; the gifts of the Holy Spirit were made into occasions for the exhibition of the pettiest of personal disputes; and Christian women, forgetting their higher instincts, and the customs of their country which embodied those instincts, came forward unveiled to make public speeches in the assemblies of the Church. It seemed as if the Greek character and nature, brilliant but paradoxical, had carried all their resources of finesse and intrigue, all their genius for controversy, and all their profound distaste for personal improvement, into the heart of the Church at Corinth. The Apostle may well have felt that he ought to be on the spot where there was so much mischief to prevent, and to cure. It must have cost him much pain, with all his burning sympathy for his Master's cause, to have set aside the claims of Corinth even for six weeks. But still he did, though he must have known that there was one voice to which all the Church there would listen; one heart to which all would sooner or later respond; one will to which all would bend. His presence at Corinth was of the first necessity, but there was a higher necessity for him to be elsewhere, so he struck the balance at once. Indecision may be a characteristic of a weak mind, but in this case the Apostle looked at the matter in the practical way every one who has a mission for advancing the religion of Christ must do. For we have to work for a cause which can never be universally popular and in the presence of an enemy who never sleeps, and by whom any errors we may commit are certainly and immediately taken advantage of.

There is no doubt that prompt decision as to the right course is at times a matter of the greatest difficulty, but we who serve Christ Jesus our Lord in a sense different from other men, dare not abdicate the duty—the great duty—of decision. If rash resolution be wrong, the absence of all resolution is not right. The man asserts his innate manhood, the Christian puts forth the power of the indwelling Christ, when feeling that God's eye is upon him, and that he shall one day stand before the great Judgment Seat, he makes up his mind upon this matter of great importance; when taking all his passions, feelings, hopes, fears, ambitions, and enthusiasms well in hand, he proclaims from amidst the very chaos of tumult within him, the sentence of that sovereign faculty of his race, the sentence of his will — of a will placed under the guidance of a well instructed conscience. St. Paul has told us in one place, "I find a law, that when I would do good evil is present with me; for I delight in the law of God after the inward man; but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin which is in my members," but here we see him, not hesitating, not irresolutely parleying with countervailing motives, still less resistlessly yielding the mastery to impulse, but forming his purpose calmly. His resolution is formed, but yet he has it well in hand. He knows how far to let the reins go and when to draw them in, and he says, "I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost."

Now, upon what reasons was this decision founded? Upon two; and of these the first is the greatness of the opportunity afforded by the approaching festival of Pentecost at Ephesus. St. Paul in his vivid and expressive way calls the opportunity a "door," by which he hoped might enter all those who were nearest and dearest to his heart. Nay he intensifies his metaphor almost at the risk of destroying it, for he tells us it is not only a "great door" but that it is "effectual," as if the whole act were instinct with its motive, as though it were impossible for the Apostle not to endeavour to make the most of every opportunity. It had not always been thus at Ephesus. St. Paul must have heard much about the fervid teaching of the eloquent Apollos, following upon the labours of Aquila and Priscilla, but yet it must have cheered his heart to have the prospect of baptizing more converts to the influence of the Holy Ghost. Accordingly he resolved to stay at Ephesus, and he made the Jewish Synagogue in that city the starting point of his activity. Saturday after Saturday for three months, he went there preaching and arguing —holding what in these times we should call a series of "Conferences."—upon the religion of God, and salvation through Jesus Christ. As a pupil of Gamaliel he well knew the way to approach the hearts of his countrymen. He knew that the kingdom of the Messiah, as shadowed forth in the sacred writings, was a very different thing from the hard, dry, political institution, the idea of which was then popular among the Jews.

But though St. Paul preached to ears which did not mean to be convinced, and though the Ephesians would not do justice to the preacher, they could not afford to treat him with contempt. Accordingly his preaching was denounced with insult. It was then that he determined to separate himself from the main body of the Jews, and thenceforth he taught his disciples in one of those side wings or buildings usually attached to the public baths and gymnasiums, and which was frequented by Tyrannus, who was probably a teacher of rhetoric. There he was day by day, sometimes speaking to Pagans, and sometimes to his own countrymen, upon the nature and claims of the Gospel. There would be found men from all parts of Asia to which the news of St. Paul's teaching had penetrated, and there would be discussed the miracles and remarkable events that we read of in the Acts of the Apostles; the public discomfiture of the seven sons of the priest Sceva, who attempted to make use of the sacred name of Jesus in their incantations; and the burning of the costly books filled with the recipes of the magicians. It was felt in fact that a new moral force had gone forth from that spot, and society was fermenting all round. No one would have felt this more than St. Paul. "A great door and effectual (he says) is opened unto me." The whole mass of Jewish thought was heaving with agitation before his mind's eye. Men were asking all round him, What was really truth; what was worth living for; what was worth dying for—if there were any such thing at all?—There was a wish to base life, if it could be done, upon a moral rock of some kind. There was an impatience of all that was not real. These effects were not the Gospel itself, but they were preparatory for the Gospel. The soil had to be broken up by these means before the heavenly seed could be sown with any probability of growth. It is no slight part of our responsibility to make the most of every opportunity for doing our Master's work. It is not too much to say that every one of us has some such opportunities sooner or later. We may have perhaps to work at first without encouragement in the synagogue, but a school of Tyrannus comes to all of us at last. To fail to make the most of our opportunity when it does come is possible enough from our human weakness; but to fail to try; to make no effort to comprehend that the opportunity has arrived, to be content to glide down the stream of life as though there was nothing particular in it, nothing that would have any bearing upon our highest good or that of others, implies some grave disease in our moral and spiritual constitution, if not indeed that deadly apathy for which the stern realities of spiritual life and death have no meaning. St. Paul, according to all testimony, was constantly saying or doing something, and that he was constantly succeeding was for this among other reasons, that he was always alive to opportunities of success.

The second reason given by the Apostle for remaining at Ephesus until the Pentecost was the difficulty of the situation. "There, said he, are many adversaries." To begin with, there were of course the Jews of the synagogue, who would not have forgotten the circumstances which had led to the secession of the school of Tyrannus. Then there would be the mass of turbulent spirits reduced to something like decorum by military force but always ready to break out again, and who could command the services of some powerful adherents. Already the Apostle discerned the coming storm. He did not suppose for a moment that the religion of the Crucified One could make itself a home with that joyous, pleasure-seeking, easy-tempered, and superstitious population without a struggle. Sooner or later it must come into conflict with the classes who were deeply concerned in abasing it even to the death. There were at this time a large number of skilled workmen who lived by making miniature copies of the inner shrine of the Temple of Diana. These copies were purchased by visitors and placed as ornaments upon the tables or elsewhere in the interior of the houses of the wealthy. All these men were of course interested in preventing the triumph of Christianity. They were bound to the worship of Diana by the double tie of old association and commercial enterprise, and such a combination in favour of any very good or very bad system is, as a matter of experience, always exceedingly strong. Then, again the working men throughout Asia Minor as shown by some inscriptions that have been only lately discovered, were almost universally enrolled in guilds or trades unions, so that when the interests of any particular trade were assailed, nothing was easier than to arouse opposition of a very serious kind. St. Paul well knowing of the existence of fraternities of men like Demetrius, must have had reason to anticipate such scenes as the riot at the theatre being at least very probable. But the thought of coming difficulties acted only as a stimulus to him to take advantage of this opportunity for Christian work and

Christian virtue. For what does virtue mean but manly moral force put forward under difficulties, in accordance with the rule of right, and put forward more frequently when surrounded by such difficulties. In fact difficulty is necessary to the full development of virtue, just as the soft atmosphere of unimpeded success fosters slowly, yet surely, moral effeminacy and moral decay. Therefore it was that St. Paul looked at these "many adversaries" not only as being no drawback, but as a positive attraction. They raised within him not any mere spirit of natural brute combativeness, but that spiritualized military temper which he tells us in his Epistle to the Ephesians is one great characteristic of the true Christian. He was a soldier by profession and had become a good soldier of Jesus Christ. He therefore felt that it was a good thing to be on the field of battle and taking note of the strength of the enemy. For every opponent there was a possible convert; every opponent there, was at any rate in the last resort but an impotent antagonist. "Who shall separate us, he cries at last, from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us; for I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

But, my brethren, this solemn occasion speaks for itself. Words are often out of place when men's hearts are full; when there is much that flits before the eye of the soul which words cannot compass. Those of us who are here this morning as candidates for ordination will understand something of that which St. Paul speaks of in the text. Like him we have arrived at a conclusion. We have made up our minds upon a matter that binds us for life, just as he made up his mind to remain six weeks longer in his Master's service at Ephesus. God help us now and hereafter to say "I have paid Thee my vows which I promised with my lips and spake with my heart."

There may be much to plead for our following other lines of life. We do not deny that there are ways of serving God in secular employments, and that secular employments may be hallowed by religious motives. But we have chosen our Ephesus. We have put our hands to the plough, and by God's grace we will not look back. We want no "Clerical Disabilities' Act" to relieve us from what is a voluntary and most welcome service. We have put on the uniform of the Captain of our Salvation, the sacrificed Saviour, and we will wear no other for all the world can give.

But "there are many adversaries." Certainly there are. The man who takes Holy Orders in the present day does so under very different circumstances from those who did so forty, twenty, or even ten years ago. It is undeniably more difficult to meet a clergyman's responsibilites now than formerly. More is expected in personal exertion and in ministerial efficiency and ability. The air, too, is filled with controversies which may be approached in many ways, but which can only be handled in the eye of eternal truth in one way. The Romish Church has never confronted the English Church upon so serious a scale as now in every rank of society. Nonconformity and Infidelity have never before so united their forces against all our efforts to give education to the people. The future is pregnant with possibilities. Who will attempt to say what will be the outward status of the Church of England twenty or even ten years hence? Who can look forward now as our forefathers may be assumed to have done, to a settled order of events which shall outlast our time, which shall subsist almost unimpaired when we shall have gone to our account? Out of those days of tranquil and assured repose, we have—it is God's will and providence—passed into this very different period when all around us betrays a foolish impatience of what has been, and what is; when change, as change, is spoken of as if it had an inherent, I had almost said a sacramental, virtue; when blasts of destructive infidel thought sweep though the intellectual atmosphere, paralyzing in numbers of simple souls—even of most devout members—some of the most venerable memories and affections of our Church; when men are accustomed to look at favourably, to think of patiently, and even in some cases to welcome, the public abandonment and repudiation of some of the most authoritative and sacred landmarks of our Faith.

This is a time, too, when moral and social ideas are not less challenged than higher and eternal truths; when Society, if it speak its mind, is profoundly troubled and haunted by a terrible suspicion that it may yet have to reckon with foes more serious than any it has encountered since it rose a thousand years ago out of the chaos of barbarous life. And yet beyond any other class of men who deal, or ought to deal, with the gravest problem of the world of thought,—who are or ought to be more directly or intimately interested than any other class of men in the material as well as the spiritual well-being of the people, the Clergy must be instinctively alive to these grave questions. As a matter of fact, I can say from experience, they do deter many men who in other days would have taken Holy Orders, from doing so now. Do not let us forget this.

But it is better thus. The strength of the Church does not consist in the number of pages of its "Clerical Directory," but in the sum total of moral and spiritual force which she has at command. It is well that we should look upon the difficulties of our time as far as we can, as did St. Paul in his.

They are, I dare to say, as nothing to the man who has an honest heart and a good positive belief. For after all, my brethren, why is it that we do take Orders? Is it not because we believe and are assured that eighteen centuries ago, an event, or a series of events occured, compared with which all that has since occurred, all that can possibly happen even in *our* eventful days, must be utterly insignificant? Is it not that like St. Paul at Ephesus, we believe and are sure that the Everlasting Son of God really entered this world under the ordinary conditions of space and time, and died upon the Cross for the sins of all men? That He arose from the grave where they had laid Him when He was really dead? That He ascended to the heavenly throne and has been there pleading for us ever since, and is doing so at this moment? That God has given us His Spirit and His Sacraments? Is it not because we are convinced that out of the infinite treasury of His love He has done this for us—for each of us,—and that the very least we can do is to yield Him our most free and cheerful services under such circumstances as He may will, in storm or in sunshine, in battle or in repose, in the times of hopefulness, or in the days of despondency? To say that it matters little when or where, is surely but to say that when seen with a nearer horizon, the tangled web of Ecclesiastical and Political change dwarfs down to its true proportions, and that we shall see nothing before us but Christ crucified, and souls perishing all around from lack of knowledge, or lack of grace; that it must be our duty, as it was the duty of our predecessors, the duty of the great Apostle himself, the grand duty of each one of us, to bring them within our reach by whatever moral or intellectual instruments we can command; to lead them to the foot of the atoning Cross; to get them a share in the sprinkling of the cleansing blood; to make them know something of that power and wisdom of God which will be to the end of time a stumbling block to the self-righteous, and foolishness to the self-opiniated.

For this blessed work, blessed in its usefulness to others, blessed in its reflex effects upon those who undertake it earnestly, and in humble dependence upon God's grace, we have now, I dare to say, great opportunities. The difficulties of our time will not stop us; they will rather stimulate and assist us. The evils attending this great work, if we must call them so, are not so formidable after all. Rome has recently by her own act condemned herself to the task of advocating the infallibility of a long list of conflicting and self-contradictory facts and things. Puritanism—to regard our work in all its phases—while it still clutches the pietest formulas of its earlier and better times with convulsive eagerness, is more and more surely forfeiting its own vitality as it sinks down year by year into that pit of scepticism which its stern refusal of the sacramental uses, graces, and doctrines of the Church has already undeniably prepared for it. And so of those other forms of thought which are the implacable enemies of all belief in the name of God and a divine Christ; they cannot in the long run satisfy a being like Man, who has within himself the instinctive presentiment, and the ineffaceable evidence of his own immortality; Man for whom the ideas of moral light, and coming judgment, ideas which God, revealed in Christ, can alone adequately explain and satisfy, can never be resolved into "a mere sentiment."

The state of things around us now, therefore, is in our favour. We have a better chance of gaining a hearing for our Divine Master than our predecessors of former days, when thought was stagnant, and habits and manners fixed; when men frequently were what they were for no other reason but a traditional one; when critics and theorists had not exercised themselves upon the problems which to-day agitate the human mind, without affording the Truth even an opportunity of speaking for itself, and then of triumphing. Those who are farthest from the Truth have often profound, though yet undeveloped and unrecognized sympathies with it. The King of the intellectual world, Jesus Christ, is ever ruler, even in the midst of His enemies, and the conditions of human life do not alter. Men live, and suffer, and die just as they did 1800 years ago. The real significance of this short and mysterious passage which we call Life is not obliterated by material civilization, or by the mental theories of our day.

God grant, my brethren, that be the scene of your labours what and where it may, you may teach and act,—that we may all teach and act,—as men who know that they are ministering as dying men to dying men; and so that your lives' anxieties and your light afflictions which are but for a moment—should such in God's providence await you—may work out for you a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory through the boundless grace and mercy of Christ Jesus our Lord.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. EDWARD LESTER,

Incumbent of Northshore, Liverpool, and Acting Chaplain to Her Majesty's Forces at the North Fort.

"*And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other.*"—Acts xv, 39.

We should never be off our guard, for when least expected, dangers arise and when all seems love and friendship, from some unexpected cause, love departs and friendship ends. Here we have two men who love each other; and who have hitherto been, not only great friends but close, loving, intimate companions, suddenly and unexpectedly contending, and at last separating from each other. Little did St. Paul suppose when he said to Barnabas "Let us go again and visit our brethren, in every city, where we have preached the Word of the Lord, and see how they do"—little, I say, did St. Paul suspect when he thus addressed his old companion, that a dispute would at once arise between them. He felt nothing but love towards Barnabas, and Barnabas felt nothing but love towards him, and there could not have appeared to the Apostle anything in the matter he had at heart likely in the very least degree to mar the friendship, and dissolve the union which subsisted between him and Barnabas. We know, however, no sooner was the proposition of re-visiting the Churches made, than these two good men became angry with each other and at last separated. Does not all this tell us never to feel too sure of the assistance of anyone, however closely united to us in the bonds of friendship? Does it not also tell us how easily disputes arise, and how very careful we should be lest union give place to discord? An unguarded look, or a careless word, will separate the dearest friends and make them bitter foes. Let us pray for grace, so to speak and act, as never to grieve a friend; and let us be careful that no disputes arise between us lest they grow so sharp as to call forth anger and destroy love. It is a painful sight indeed, to see two loving friends falling-out with each other, and the more so, as too often it is about a matter of no moment. Oh, that we were wiser; willing to take wrong, ever willing to sacrifice our own feelings rather than allow anger to arise which may mar the friendship of years and make our brother for ever a stranger to us. Friendship is a blessed thing—it is one of Eden's flowers left us; it is a beautiful but tender plant. What a wretched world this would be without it; how sad; how desolate. Friendship is the great sweetener of life—the sun of existence. How delicately we should handle it seeing it is so sensitive and so soon blighted. There are indeed some who value it but little and they act as if it could be obtained at will and dispensed with without great loss. They fall out with their friends without much ado, and take up with others and are incapable of real genuine friendship. They are mere butterflies, they laugh, and talk with anyone that will do the same with them, but as to loving as Jonathan loved David, they cannot. They know not that blessed feeling which unites not hands but hearts. Then there are others who are indeed capable of friendship, their feelings are strong, but, alas love of self is stronger than love of friend, and should their friend in anyway wound their self-love, or differ in opinion, immediately they are offended and at once separate from him. Alas! that any should act in this way, they do themselves great injury by it, and, when too late regret it. To all we would say, make friends *and keep them.* A man without friends is poor indeed. But remember *true* friends are very scarce, hard to meet with and not hasty in forming friendship. Think not you can have a real friend for the mere asking. Those who are worth having are slow in joining hands. They must know the man well and be assured he is worthy of their friendship, and will prove a fitting companion before they will admit him. And as friends are hard to obtain so are they difficult to retain. The more loving they are the more easily are they grieved; and it too often happens that we pain them when we have no intention of doing so, and we lose them before we are scarcely aware that we have offended them.

St. Paul was warm-hearted, capable of the strongest affection and was one whose friendship was as sincere as it was deep, indeed "friendship was to him of as much consequence as to any man that ever lived. He needed the help of friends even in his divinely conducted work. Their presence was his joy. His feelings towards them was intense. He lived in them, he was anxious about them, and in turn he looked to them for comfort. Friendships were among the comforts of his life." He was no butterfly friend but a true hearty constant one. And Barnabas was a man worthy of St. Paul's great friendship and was "full of the Holy Ghost and faith." When the brethren were afraid St. Paul was playing a part in professing Christ, Barnabas took and brought him to the Apostles and declared how he had seen the Lord in the way, and how he had boldly preached at Damascus in the name of Jesus. There cannot be the least doubt but that Barnabas entertained the most sincere friendship for St. Paul, and delighted on all occasions to be with him. They were well-suited to each other. St. Paul had the fire of great earnestness and Barnabas had the softness of great and tender love. Barnabas would admire St. Paul's zeal, and St. Paul would admire the great love of Barnabas. Ah, it is sad when such men disagree and separate; it discourages and scandalizes the Church; it grieves and injures believers, and it gives occasion to the enemy to blaspheme. And yet how often in these contentious days does St. Paul dispute with Barnabas, and Barnabas contend with St. Paul. Both good men; both loving and fearing God; both having the same cause at heart, and both meaning well, but some thing comes between them and separates them.

But now comes the question, Who was right in this dispute?

First, we would say that the dispute was on no unimportant matter—it was a matter of the very greatest moment and well justified strong feeling. It was a matter which affected religion, and also one near and dear. We quite understand why St. Paul felt so strongly upon the subject, and why Barnabas did so. "We have indeed a decided opinion as to who was right in this dispute, but can see plainly that each had much to justify him, and while we regret that a dispute should have arisen between such good men we are free to confess that it was no childish dispute about a mere nothing, but a manly dispute about a very serious and weighty matter." We only wish that this could be said about the contentions of the brethren in these days but too often their disputes spring not from strong feelings in God's cause, or even from strong love for an erring brother, but from self-will, pride, and conceit on both sides.

But who was wrong? We say Barnabas. It was very natural that he should cling to his nephew, but as his nephew had proved himself "naturally unsteadfast," and had basely left the Apostles at Pamphylia and went not with them to the work, he was evidently an unfit person for the mission; and however Barnabas might love his nephew, he ought to have made his love for him second to his love for the cause of the Gospel. God forbid we should speak against love to relations, but we must not love them more than God, and if they are calculated by their conduct to injure or hinder the cause of the Gospel, we must sacrifice our love for them, and refuse to take them with us. Perhaps indeed, Barnabas could see unmistakable signs of repentance in his nephew, and felt persuaded he would never prove unfaithful again. Still even in this case he ought not to have insisted upon taking Mark, seeing that St. Paul was so very much against it, and could not see that it was good to take Mark again with him. Surely great consideration was due to the Apostle in this matter, and if Barnabas had given way to St. Paul on this occasion he would have shown better taste, greater wisdom, and more piety. Perhaps the Apostle might have allowed Mark's conduct the extenuation it was capable of, but it was clearly a great fault for Barnabas to take his natural affection into consideration where the interest of Christ's kingdom was concerned. He could sacrifice his time, ease, and comfort for Christ's sake, but could not sacrifice his Isaac, his beloved nephew. Perhaps love blinded his eyes, and he could not see clearly and judge rightly in this matter. The Bible tells us to love all men, and to entertain great affection for our relatives, and I am bold to say the more we love God, the more shall we love our own flesh and blood. "We are not," says a modern writer, "to look jealously upon the affections and sanctities of home. The Bible does not require this. We are to be fond parents; we are to be dutiful children; we are to be loving husbands; we are to be tender wives; we are to be faithful friends; we are to be all that is true and honest, and lovely, and of good report. Religion, instead of snapping these asunder, gives them a safer and higher import; irradiates, as with a summer's beam." But though all this is most true, yet we must not forget those words of our great Teacher and Divine Master, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me." When it becomes, as it does sometimes, a question whether you shall choose God or your friend, you must at once give up your friend and decide for God. Barnabas did not do this, and hence was wrong. St. Paul did do it and hence was right.

Yes, St. Paul was right. He owed a great deal to Barnabas, but he owed far more to God, and though it was most painful to withstand the strong affectionate wishes of his devoted friend, yet as those wishes, if carried out were likely to injure the Gospel, he felt bound to oppose them even though it should cost him the loss of his friend's valued love. Ah, this was indeed not conferring with flesh and blood, this was indeed sacrificing self upon the altar of Christ, and well would it be if we had grace to allow no earthly affections to stand in the way of duty. Mere prudence would tell St. Paul not to trust Mark again, for as he had departed from him and went not to the work at Pamphylia, so in all probability he would act the same elsewhere; and even if not, he could never repose confidence in him, but would ever be in a state of anxiety lest he should do so. "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint," St. Paul would read in Proverbs xxv.; and like a wise man he refused to place any confidence again in Mark, for he indeed had been unto him in the time of trouble like a broken tooth, or a foot out of joint. Moreover a sense of duty to the cause of the Gospel would tell him it behoved him not to listen to mere kind feelings, when by so doing it might receive great damage.

There is one thing in which both acted wisely. They separated. If we cannot agree do not let us keep up anger by remaining together, but let us "depart asunder one from another." If we can come to a loving agreement after a sharp dispute it is well but if we cannot it is far better to separate. Separation will at least put an end to our contentions, and in all probability our anger will soon cool down, and a loving spirit quietly steal over us once more, and though parted in the flesh we shall be more than ever united in spirit. We know however better St. Paul's feelings were, when he parted from Barnabas, they were most kind towards him soon after, for he speaks of him and even of Mark, with great affection in the Epistles which he wrote after the sharp contention and separation. By keeping together when we cannot agree, our bitter feelings are, too often, kept alive; by separating, our anger has nothing left to feed upon, and, after a time, it calms down and we forgive—and even forget.

But how did all this end as to Mark? It was his salvation. St. Paul's rejection of him, combined with his uncle's loving faith in him worked a great change, and he became worthy, not only of the affection of Barnabas, but also of the esteem of St. Paul, and once again he became a companion of the man who had so sternly rejected him. "The charitable severity of St. Paul" says Dr. Pusey, "impressed on St. Mark the heinousness of his fault, and prepared him, by God's grace, to be stern with himself, and the founder of a strict and courageous Church, and for his crown of martyrdom; and the tender kindness of Barnabas saved him from being abandoned, and from being swallowed with over much sorrow and fainting at the outset. The Disciple was corrected by the contentions of the Teachers." Thus Mark once unprofitable, became profitable—once a coward, now became brave and noble. He began ill but ended well. Too many begin well and end ill. Let us begin, continue, and end well, so that we may gain the approval of God and win the crown of glory.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 43.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY

THE RIGHT REV.

THE LORD BISHOP OF LONDON,

(J. JACKSON, D.D.)

PREACHED AT WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY, JULY 7, 1872.

"*And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.*"—Matthew xxv, 8.

I am not proposing now to draw from this solemn and instructive parable—the parable in which these words occur—all the lessons it was intended to teach, but to confine your attention to a single point; the folly of trusting to others for our own salvation. Ten virgins took their lamps and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were wise and five of them were foolish. They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them; but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. But the wise answered saying Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you; but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut. Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord Lord, open unto us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. The attempt was vain. Neither by entreaty nor by money could the foolish virgins remedy the effects of their own negligence. Others could not help them, and when they came again afterwards saying, "Lord, Lord open unto us;" he said, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

And yet there is one consideration which may be seen to be inconsistent with this teaching. It is true that our eternal, no less than our temporal interests do appear to be very much placed in the hands of others; not merely as regards the character of the man, moulded by the influence and example of those with whom he lives, parents, friends, teachers, and so on, those whose position makes it natural that their conduct should be taken as a precedent, and makes them to some extent responsible for the good or evil that those who imitate their conduct do. But we are placed by the system of society in a peculiar position, and our spiritual blessings appear to be conveyed to us by a special instrumentality. God speaks to us, but His words are not spoken to our own souls. They come to us by other means, of which men are the ministers. All this is undeniable, and yet it is as certain that others can neither save nor condemn us; that the great work of man's salvation must be transacted in man's soul and through the agency of his own individual will. The character and example of others may have considerable influence upon the course of his career through this present life of probation; but how he comes out of the trial, is a matter of his own choice, aided, if he will, by the Spirit of God. The whole of the circumstances under which he is placed in the world will be taken into consideration, and his difficulties and temptations allowed for, by Him who can alone properly estimate them. The Great Judge of the whole earth has Himself told us, that he who did not his Lord's will because he knew it not shall be beaten with few stripes, but from whomsoever much is given, much shall be required. We are called into the Church, not that we may be saved by the Church, but that in the Church and aided by her means of grace which have been covenanted to us, we may work out our own salvation, knowing that it is God that worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. The Church of Christ is not something which stands between us and God, but rather the circle within the limits of which God's grace is ordinarily given; the fold where the sheep of the Good Shepherd find their richest pastures, and their freshest springs. Her ministers are not mediators or sacrificing priests, to stand for, or instead of us at the throne of grace, but ambassadors of Christ and stewards of His mysteries. They deliver His message but we must receive it. They administer His Sacraments but we must duly use them. The Church's prayers are not as a muttered charm spoken for us by the minister, but the "Common Prayer" in which each is to join heart and voice for himself if he would receive the promised blessing, "Again I say unto you that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven."

Holy Baptism is indeed a Sacrament at which parents may bring, in faith, their unconscious infants to the Font, and trust them in their Saviour's arms, nothing doubting but that by virtue of His merits and by the efficacy of His blessing they will be made "children of God, heirs of Christ, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven." But each such child when he has arrived at an age to know right from wrong, must personally and for himself perform the promises made for him at his baptism if he would not forfeit all the privileges of the covenant and incur the heavier condemnation of gross neglected and filial disobedience.

The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice offered for us by the priest, but a Communion, in which each of us, in the company of the faithful, eats of that one bread, and drinks of that cup, which become to each individual soul, according to his personal faith, the body and the blood of Christ; a commemoration of that one perfect and sufficient sacrifice made once for all upon the Cross; an oblation presented by each one of us, of Christ's body, the Church of our alms, our praises, and thanksgivings, and of ourselves, our souls, and bodies to be a reasonable and holy sacrifice unto God. It is true, therefore, that the instrumentality of others is ordinarily used by God to convey His grace and thus to advance our salvation, but it is not true that others can be substitutes for ourselves in this great work, or that any or all of the privileges we enjoy from their advice, example, and prayers, or even the opportunities, and the means of grace within the Church can save us without personal repentance, personal faith, personal love, and personal holiness.

Bearing, then, this in mind we may pass on to observe some of the ways in which men are in danger by trusting to others for salvation, saying to those who are, or are thought to be wiser than themselves "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out." And here it is impossible to proceed without pointing out the degree to which this dangerous error is systematized, or at all events practised in the Romish Church. In the sacrament, as it is called, of penance, confession to a priest, with sorrow for the sin confessed, and with or even without resolutions of amendment, is taught to be necessary for the remission of sin which is then confessed, is by the priest's absolution sometimes accompanied by the enjoinment of penance, or alms, or the paying for the celebration of a certain number of masses. Now whatever may be the theory of this institution—and in theory even it is most unscriptural: It does practically substitute a rite and a human minister in the place of its duty, of all others the most distasteful to man's heart in true repentance. God indeed is entirely put out of sight. The conscience is not brought into contact with God. Confession is made to the priest. The shame, if any, is felt towards the priest. Absolution is received from the priest. If the priest have erred and mistaken the signs of repentance, *he* is to blame; the penitent still goes away absolved. And the outward acts, which are enjoyed as penance, however tedious or however costly, are gladly accepted in the place of that bitter contrition which breaks the heart of the true penitent before God and humbles him at the Cross of Christ. The lamps are negligently trimmed, and the vessels are scant of oil, when men may go as often as they please to these dispensers of the mercy of God, and say, "Give us of your oil for our lamps have gone out."

Still more perilous in practical effect is the doctrine of Indulgences as taught in the Roman Catholic Church. All sin is, in theory, not only an offence against God, and, as such pardonable for Christ's sake; but it is also a scandal upon the Church, and as such requires satisfaction to be made by penance. But as penance is, and can be, but inefficiently and unsatisfactorily performed in this life, and as large numbers of sins are never discovered in this life at all, satisfaction has to be made for them in "Purgatory," an intermediary penal state where the souls of those who are pardoned by God, and will ultimately enter heaven, suffer the temporal punishments which they did not endure upon earth. This punishment being an extension of, or supplement to, the Church's penances, the Church of course may remit or abridge it. It may be shortened by the repeated sacrifice of the Mass, to procure remission of pain and guilt or by "Indulgences" which are granted out of the store of supererogatory merits of the saints, and of Jesus Christ, thereby taking from the penalty some, it may be hundreds or thousands of years of what otherwise would have been its duration. And all this is to be obtained by visiting certain shrines, and repeating certain prayers; or even by the payment of a certain large, or perhaps not very large, sum of money!

This is a striking proof of the deceivableness of the human heart. One would think that anybody who had ever had access to a Bible would resist such a theory as monstrous and unsupported by one word of Scriptural authority. But I speak now not of its errors, but of its practical dangers. The eternal punishment of sin to be inflicted by God, and even the Judgment Day itself, are apt to be lost sight of in this system of "Indulgences." Nor indeed need it be a subject of great concern, if (as is taught) regret for the past sins which subject men to it, and which no dying man can well be without, and the reception of the Sacraments on the death-bed is sufficient to save man from sin's consequences. Purgatory instead is everything: a temporary punishment, however long may be its period, and therefore incapable of bearing up and operating as a check against the violence of passion, and which may be abridged or abrogated by means which we can procure in this world. Why then stay the gratification of any vicious propensity, when the punishment is but temporary and can be so easily averted? Why should we throw away our opportunities of unlawful pleasures when we can purchase indulgences, or if we cannot purchase them ourselves, may be assured that benevolent friends and relations will never leave us to bear the misery of the punishment? Why should we try to avoid the particular sin that besets us, when in this store of supererogatory merits of the saints, there is enough and to spare, and we can at any time go and "buy oil" for ourselves?

And thus men go on in sin resting upon a false confidence that has no foundation whatever in the Word of God and must break under them at the Judgment Day? It is indeed with an awful significance, though they know it not, that Roman Catholic writers have even quoted this very parable as an authority for this system of selling indulgences. There are, they say, those who sell, and we may buy if we like. There are indeed! We *may* buy their pretended "indulgences," *and* we may lose our own souls. While the foolish virgins went to buy, the bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, *and the door was shut!* Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; but he answered and said, "Verily I say unto you I know you not."

It would perhaps be more useful, however to proceed to notice cases in which we, in our own Church, may be in danger of a somewhat similar error.

Our Church recommends the ordinary and necessary ways and means of preparation for the Holy Communion, which are, "first, to examine your lives and conversations by the rule of God's commandments, and whereinsoever ye shall perceive yourselves to have offended, either by will, word, or deed, there to bewail your own sinfulness and to confess yourselves to Almighty God, with full purpose of amendment of life. And if ye shall perceive your offences to be such as are not only against God but against your neighbours, then ye shall reconcile yourselves unto them, being ready to make restitution and satisfaction according to the utmost of your powers, for all injuries and wrongs done by you to any other, and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as ye would have forgiveness of your offences at God's hand," is unable to quiet his own conscience therein, but requireth further comfort or counsel, he may go to "some discreet and learned minister of God's Word and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness." She provides also in the order for the Visitation of the Sick that "the sick person shall be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feels his conscience troubled with any weighty matter; after which confession the priest shall absolve him, if he humbly and heartily desire it." This practice of confession to a minister with a view to obtaining absolution and direction, which is evidently intended only as a special remedy for exceptional and morbid cases, is now not only recommended but almost required by some and too readily accepted by others, as an important if not a necessary condition of a sound spiritual state. The Church's medicine is administered and taken as though it were the soul's food and the result is with the soul, as it would be with the body, that the general health becomes feeble and needs habitual recourse to the physician's help.

But it is not to this consequence of the practice of Confession as a rule, instead of as a rare exception, that I am now particularly referring, nor to the terrible evils that we are taught to connect with it, in reading the history of the past. I am asserting that we have no right to divest ourselves of that great though necessary duty of training our own consciences, or to commit it faithfully and self-indulgently to the direction of others. "Herein," said St. Paul, "do I exercise myself (and the pronoun is emphatic in the original, "Herein do *I* exercise *myself*") to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward man." His precepts to his converts are in every respect in accordance with his own practice. Personal responsibility—the noblest, and therefore the most perilous of God's gifts, the grand prerogative of man, which distinguishes and differences him from the brutes; and links him to the higher intelligences of the universe, may not be evaded or paltered with, or placed in another's hands, either through timidity, or a lack of humility, or a want of faith. He who as in God's sight ever does his best, seeking wisdom from heaven, confessing his follies and sins, his errors and mistakes, on the rising from falls and mistakes humbly but hopefully, to renew his contest against evil within and without, cannot fail the victory. He is doing his own work; improving his own talent. The success which God gives him is his own; and even his earnest failings and lowest errors which may be pardoned for their motive's sake. But he who places his conscience and moral character in the hands of another transfers to him the talent for which he is responsible, shrinks from a responsibility which ought to ennoble him, and incurs the consequences of self-sought guilt, into which men fallible like himself may have led him. We are to provide our own oil and trim our own lamps. The wisest virgins had none for others; and while the foolish virgins went elsewhere to purchase, the door was shut.

There is another error to which a different class of minds are exposed, so unreasonable that it will scarcely require to be confuted, though not so uncommon as not to need to be pointed out. It is where persons who belong to a religious family, or are closely connected with pious individuals, or are favourably situated with respect to the ministrations of religion and the means of grace, accept these instead of real personal religion. They breathe constantly a religious atmosphere; the great subject is always before them; they live with those who walk with God; but do they walk with God themselves? If they do not, these blessings, and great blessings they undoubtedly are, may become a curse. Another's piety can in no sense be their piety. They cannot be pardoned by another's repentance, nor justified by another's faith, nor conformed to their Saviour's likeness by another's holiness. All this must be done by themselves, and by the working of the Holy Spirit in themselves. They have great privileges in having the advantage of good men's prayers, good men's society, and good men's example, and on that account they are under a stricter responsibility to improve those privileges as they ought. But if they are negligent of their spiritual life, because they have so many spiritual blessings, if they are carelessly, contented in a religious family, and without personal religion of their own; if they take no oil in their own vessels because they see the lamps of others burn so brightly, they must not only look to be shut out when the bridegroom cometh, but also to find that by the mis-use of their privileges they have incurred the heavier condemnation involved in the sentence, "Unto whom much is given, much shall be required."

But let us turn to another and still more common case; a life spent in sinful indulgence or in that negligent worldliness which without actually violating God's commandments, or forfeiting the respect of man, has left religion, little more than a few religious observances and a vague profession of a Creed. At all events the soul has not been awakened and brought into conscious contact with the great duties and truths of God and of the judgment to come. There may have been warnings and strivings but they have been resisted or postponed. In general there was a careless peace. At length sickness comes; it assumes a serious form; there is little hope; the soul grows alarmed; there are dim and indistinct fears that all is not right, not fitted for entering eternity; the sick man perhaps does not speak of this but he feels it. The cry is made "Behold the Bridegroom cometh!" but there is no oil in his vessel, and his lamp is going out. The clergyman is sent for. I am not blaming the sending for the clergyman, but why is he sent for? Because there is a vague notion that he can do for the sick man something that he cannot do for himself; that he can be a substitute in the all-important transactions between the departing soul and its Creator; can give him oil for his empty lamp and at once fit him to meet the Bridegroom. And the poor patient, with dizzy brain and fading faculties listens to his exhortations and attempts perhaps in vain to join in his prayers. Too often, however, the numbness of death is upon him; it is too late for repentance; "the door was shut!" And yet his friends will probably comfort themselves, in their bereavement, by the thought that all was done that could be done; that he was prepared to die; perhaps put off their own repentance to the same awful hour, and hope that their "last end may be like his."

My dear friends, it would be inexcusable to call up thoughts like these in your minds wantonly merely for the sake of hurting your feelings, but with things constantly passing under our notice in this Christian land, it would be cruel not to warn you while there is yet time. I am not blaming the practice of sending for the clergyman, he ought to be sent for much sooner and more frequently than he is. But suffer me to tell you what the clergyman can do for you, and what he cannot do for you, and what you must do for yourselves. The minister of the Gospel, when called to the side of the sick-bed can open his Bible and point out the necessity of repentance. He can shew from its pages the true nature of sin. And can teach that the most prevailing and most fatal sin is often that which alarms a man's conscience the least—an habitual living for self instead of for God. He can assist repentance by suggesting subjects for self-examination, and by reviving self-accusing thoughts. He can point to the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world ; and to that Cross under whose shadow every believing penitent may be safe. He can combat difficulties, and place in a clearer light the love of God and the promises of the Gospel. He can also pray with the sick man in his bed-chamber, and for him at home in his closet; and he can strive in earnest intercession for this stricken sheep of the flock by bearing his name in his words, as he leads the united prayers of the congregation. He can declare authoritatively the pardon which God gives for Christ's sake to all who repent and believe; and he can administer that Holy Sacrament which to the soul of the repentant sinner conveys the spiritual food of which He said who gives it: "Whoso eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the Last Day." He can do all this: but he cannot repent for him, he cannot believe for him; he cannot make his peace with God for him, and in his stead This each must do for himself. Still less can he make him a new creature which all must be made, who would be in Christ Jesus; nor give him the Spirit of Christ, without which we are none of His. This God alone can do. I am not now speaking of course of infants and irresponsible persons; but in every soul saved there must be personal repentance, unreserved sorrow for and confession of sin, and a sincere purpose of amendment. There must be personal faith, a thankful, though it may be, trembling, embracing, and holding fast on the promises of God in Christ Jesus. There must also be a change in heart and life; a change I mean from what we all of us are by nature, and what too many of us continue by practice; a change that must be wrought in us by the grace of God the Holy Ghost.

Now let me put it to your own good sense my brethren, is this a work to be left to the death bed? Is the service of God and the salvation of our souls, (for which the longest lifetime is too short) to be crowded into the few moments of pain and weakness at the last? Or can we think—that after slumbering (if not worse) through our existence here—our lamps extinguished and our vessels empty—we can go to any human being like ourselves and obtain from him that which we have so long neglected? No, my brethren, we cannot. They that were *ready* went in to the wedding and the door was shut.

But now—if there be any who are conscious that their past lives have but little agreement with our Lords injunction "Let your loins be girded about and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord when he will return from the wedding, that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately;" and who are anxious to learn how years of neglect may be atoned for and replaced by zeal in God's service for the future. Let me point you to one who has atoned for all your sins—Jesus Christ, our righteousness. Go to Him confessing your selfish worldly lives, bearing these empty vessels and these untrimmed and expiring lamps—not to buy of Him, for what have we to offer for His pardoning grace?—but to ask Him for what He delights to freely give us, pardon for past sins, grace for the renewal of our hearts, the reformation of our characters in holiness. The one Jesus Christ purchased for us by His death, the other when He ascended on high He received to bestow upon man. Ask in faith and in earnest and they are already yours, and fed by that heavenly source, having an unction of the Holy One, your lamps may yet burn brightly, and your lives of consistent holiness may witness you to be of the children of the bridegroom, so that you may look forward in happy hope for that unknown hour in which the bridegroom comes, to enter into the joy of your Lord. And let us all like faithful servants aim at having our loins girded and our lamps burning.

Let us remember, that though the example of others may aid us, they cannot save or excuse us; that though the Church is ordinary necessary to our salvation it is in it, but not by it, that we must be saved, that though this salvation is wrought in us by Jesus Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit, yet it is only for those who work out their own salvation by fear and trembling, by personal repentance and self dedication of the soul to God, by a conscientious embracing of His offers of mercy, and by a close and persevering use of all the means of grace.

This is the attitude in which the wise await and expect their Lord. Thus their lamps are burning brightly while they wait; thus they provide oil in their vessels; thus will it be a summons of joy to them when the midnight cry is made, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet him."

Watch, then, my brethren, "for ye know not the day nor the hour when the the Son of Man cometh."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. T. ARMFIELD, M.A.,

Vice-Principal of the Theological College, Salisbury, Vicar of the Close, and Minor Canon of Sarum.

PREACHED IN THE NAVE OF SALISBURY CATHEDRAL,

ON SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 1872.

On the occasion of the visit of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, K.G., to the Autumn Manœuvres.

"*And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria.*"—2 Kings x, 1.

The chapter which has been read to you to-day suggests to me some thoughts which will fall in happily with the general direction of your minds upon an occasion which has collected in our tranquil city this magnificent assemblage, and has made it for the moment nothing less than a centre of national interest. The chapter has in fact brought us to a point in the history of Israel and Judah, which challenges us to grasp the full significance of the strange contrast presented by the two kingdoms. No example, I believe, in the annals of the world presents so splendid an opportunity for the study of what I may venture to call comparative polity,—for the observing, that is, with something like scientific accuracy, what conditions in the life of a nation are likely to conduct it to disaster, and what to comparative success.

It needs only a glance upon the surface of the history to discover at least this fact, that the two nations having apparently almost everything in common, and aiming each of them at an hereditary succession to its throne, encountered in this latter respect exactly opposite results. Judah, from the time of David to her ruin, had always upon her throne a member of the house of David, the succession passing always quietly, to the lineal representative of the family, with the momentary exception of the *coup d' état* effected by Athaliah. Israel, on the contrary, never was able to accomplish this, harassed and of course weakened as she was by incessant changes of dynasty, and never securing the throne to the same family for above two or three turns in succession. The contrast, indeed, is not altogether unlike that presented by the career of France and the career of England in the last hundred and fifty years.

Nowhere, however, in Holy Scripture is the restless anarchy of Israel so emphasized as it is in the few words of the text. " And Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria." They stand in an isolation from their context which is significant. They are well placed so. There are volumes of history hinted in those few words. At other times changes may have seemed imminent, or even natural; but *then*, at all events, if ever, was the moment when we should have said there would be no failure in the succession to the throne, " Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria." It seemed an almost certain guarantee against an empty throne. Seventy persons with a claim to the succession! and these, not living in exile, and therefore unprepared to take advantage of a crisis; but, as the sacred history is careful to tell us, " Seventy sons *in Samaria*"—in the capital of their father's kingdom; seventy sons who, with the spirit of the Hebrew, were not of the sort to abdicate their rights without an effort; who, with the blood of Israel in their veins, and the traditions of Joshua, and Gideon, and Samson, ever flashing in their memories, would be no slinking cowards in vindicating their just prerogative; seventy sons, possibly with their private family jealousies against each other, yet still, we should have thought, with enough mutual cohesion amongst themselves to defeat the pretensions of what they must have considered an upstart claimant of the throne. The chances, you will say, were nothing short of enormous in favour of the succession: but yet, as we know, it failed. The seventy sons, and the defeated succession—that catastrophe is the first point to which I beg your attention to-day.

And now let me transfer your thoughts to the sister kingdom of Judah. There also it was, just at this point of the history, the moment of a political and religious crisis. There also an attempt had been made—a fruitless attempt, as the event proved—but an attempt had been made to defeat the succession of the line of David by the temporary seizure of the kingdom on the part of the infamous Athaliah. Judah, you will observe, had its dynastic crisis as well as Israel; but what is relevant to my purpose to-day is this, that that disaster, which was exceptional in the case of Judah, was normal in the case of Israel. What could have been the causes, then, we are led to ask, which contributed to this startling difference between two kingdoms that had so much in common? It was said by a famous ruler of modern times that "Great effects never proceed from small causes." What was the great cause, then, which produced this great effect, this striking difference—that of the two nations, the one should have been able to maintain its polity in tranquillity always; and the other, never? Here were two nations with almost everything in common—owning the same ancestry, made of the same material, speaking the same language, believing in the same constitution, treasuring the same memories,—yes, handling even the same Bible—what was the point of difference between the two that made their histories so different? I can see but one point of difference between them—the one had a religion, and the other had none. Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria; but in his kingdom there was no religion. Those two calves that had been set up by Jeroboam, the founder of the kingdom, had long ago been fatal to the religious sentiment of the nation. They were quite alive, indeed, to the impossibility of man's doing altogether without a religion; and, therefore, as they had at the onset cut themselves off from the faith of their forefathers, they were forced to be ever beating about with a shifting empiricism for a new faith; and so now it was a Phœnician god they patronised, now a Syrian, and now an Ammonite—one year a Baal; and the next, Moloch; and a third Ashtoreth—anything but the God of their fathers they worshipped. And here is the one discernible point of difference between Israel and Judah, between the polity that was tranquil and the polity that was convulsed—the one had a genuine religious conviction; and the other, of course, pretended to have, but in reality had none.

The contrast stands before us with a grave significance at a moment when we are on the point of welcoming amongst us the successor to our own throne. We think of the seventy sons of Ahab; and we ask what are the chances that for ourselves things will continue as they have been before. Hitherto we have enjoyed a tranquillity that has been quite exceptional; and upon the whole our system has been more like that of Judah than that of Israel. We have had a religion; and we have not only insisted upon its doing its part in moulding individual character, and in mellowing the relations of private life, but we have put it to the front as an integral part of our polity, and as one of the most indispensable of the social forces at our disposal. Now, however, it is impossible to disguise it from ourselves—a form of thought is circulating amongst us which invites us to change all this, and which pronounces dogmatically that the less religion enters into the polity of a nation, the better for all interests concerned. That really is the persuasion which underlies those several movements which have been of late most prominent amongst us, taking the form of a proposal—one year that you should isolate your education from religion, another year that you should disestablish a Church, and next year, no doubt, of something else; the persuasion, I mean, that religion is a thing alien to the State—that religion is not only of no importance, but that its presence is actually mischievous elsewhere than in the individual conscience. And because the devout conscience of this nation has been shocked at such a position as this, therefore the persuasion in question has at times presumed to come before us with the affectation of superior culture; and it tells us that on pain of intellectual outlawry we must accept it as a thesis of the philosphies, that "the function of government is distinct from the function of religion." Why, of course it is distinct. I pray them not to treat us as ignoramuses. Of course it is distinct, in the province of thought. And so I would remind you, if I might draw an illustration from the incidents of the moment—so I would remind you, in the passage of a gun-shot to its butt, the function of gravitation is distinct from the function of the resistance offered by the medium of the atmosphere. Distinct as possible in the province of thought; and, therefore, your trained artillery officer, so long as he is moving in that province of thought, so long as he is investigating and formulating the passage of his ball, is led by his practised mathematical instinct to consider the two functions apart, calculating the effect of each precisely as though the other did not exist. But you could not surely suppose him to be ignorant that when he stands in presence of the enemy, the two functions will infallibly operate together. The separation, in truth, that was convenient in theory, is found to be impossible in practice. And it is precisely here that the plea before us fails. It fails, because it is impossible. No doubt the function of government is distinct from the function of religion; but when you advance from that position in the province of thought to a proposal for a divorce of all connexion between the two, you propose not so much what is logically foolish as what is practically impossible. As matter of fact, States always have had a religion of some kind or other. Why, the Roman Emperor, in the most vicious days of the ancient empire, thought it always necessary to call himself not only "Emperor," but "Pontifex Maximus," chief Pontiff, the custodian of religion. Even Israel, as we have seen, had a religion of a kind. Civil government is, of course, in its supreme essence, a thing of force. If you have no higher motives, you obey because you *must* obey. But civilized life is not conducted, and could not be satisfactorily conducted, upon such considerations as these alone. Evacuate religion, and you thereby evacuate all those moral ties between man and man, which render our intercourse with each other anything else than simply insufferable. Ask yourself a question about any one of those moral ties which happens to strike you as the most indispensable for the cohesion of society—truth of word, for instance. Truth of word—the fact that upon the whole men will speak truth to you—that it is which in its turn generates trust and confidence, and upon which all the business of life fundamentally depends. Well, truth of word is entirely the product of religion. Obliterate not only Christianity, but much more than this—obliterate the very idea of religion from the series of possible human conceptions, and then what guarantee have you that each or any man you have to do with will speak truth? You say, perhaps, self-interest will be such a guarantee; men will find that it pays to speak the truth. But your thoughts have already anticipated the reply that the cases in which it would pay you, in which it would be more convenient to you to break your word, are scarcely less numerous than those in which it would pay you to keep it. Baffled here, you try elsewhere, and you say then men's sense of honour would be the guarantee you want. But the reply again is that the sense of honour is by no means a necessary or universal ingredient in human character. The sense of honour, too, is that chivalrous regard for your spoken word which bids you to respect it at all costs and hazards to yourself, and which is the glory of our western society—that sense of honour is, in point of fact, nothing but the deposit which religion has left as it swept across the face of civilization. And so at last it comes to this—that for truth of word, at once the most rudimentary and the most indispensable of social ties, the ultimate guarantee is nothing but religion, the belief in a God who will judge righteously, and who in the long run will avenge any outrage upon His law of truth. It was the sagacious saying of a Prime Minister of a past generation, "Don't trust a man who doesn't believe in a God." You *cannot*, in short, have a polity without a religion.

It is with this conviction, then—this conviction of the necessary and indissoluble marriage between a successful polity and a healthy religion—it is with this conviction that the Church throws herself cordially into any welcome offered to the successor to our own throne. Cordially, I say; for I speak in the name of the religious heart of England, and I say that he is already ours—ours, because he is bound to us by memories of a tenderness which perhaps never before gathered round a throne; ours, because we have won him. It was but in the lengthening nights of the bygone year that the science of England wrung its hands in despair, and said that he must die. And then it was that the prayer of England went heavenward, and won him. Ours, we say, then, he has become by the memory of a sympathy which we cannot doubt has touched him; ours, by the prayers which won him from the grasp of Death; ours, too, by the hopes and the prayers wherewith we shall continue to follow him—prayers that he may always be surrounded by grave and wise counsellors who may help to guide him through those almost infinite temptations which lie about such a career as his, and hopes, that under his future rule, whatever may be the destiny of other parts of Europe, the kingdom of these isles at least may be, and may continue to be, a kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 44.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. DANIEL MOORE, M.A.,

Vicar of Holy Trinity, Paddington.

Chaplain in Ordinary to the Queen.

PREACHED AT ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 31, 1872.

"*O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?*"—1 Corinthians xv, 55.

And all the glorified inhabitants of Heaven take up the challenge, and say "Where?" And the souls of the faithful witnesses that lie under the altar cry out exultingly "Where?" And the very last of our beloved ones, over whose remains we scatter dust in "God's-Acre," is ready to make answer "Where?" "Not on us had death or the grave any victory," say the noble army of martyrs; "for we overcame by the blood of the Lamb." "Not on us," declare the great company of the redeemed; "for we are made more than conquerors through Him that loved us." "Not in us," exclaims the teeming population of the paradise-world; "for the Lord of Life and Immortality has us in His holy keeping, and He has the keys of Hell and Death." "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

With the words of our text I may assume you are all familiar. You have heard them, it is likely, when the evidence of the power of death was before you in the shrouded and coffined form of one you loved, and when the open vault at your feet told you of a truth that the grave had, in one sense, victory. But still only in a very limited sense, as the Apostle proceeds to show. The victory was not in death or the grave after all: it was in the believer. "Thanks be unto God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Our meditations may first be directed to the *sting of Death—what it is, and how it is to be taken away.* "O Death, where is thy sting?" is the fine interrogatory of the Apostle. Where is it? What is it? Wherein lies its great strength? To which the first answer to be returned is—the sting of Death is the sting of natural fear—the instinctive dread we all have of the act of dissolution. It is the invincible recoil of flesh and blood from the fulfilment of that sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." The Apostle distinctly recognizes this as a part of the sting, when he specifies, as the result of Christ's death, that He "thereby delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage." And the fear is common to all nations and to all hearts, from the barbarian or the Greek, from the groves of Academus or the deep forests and vast prairies of the North American continent, there has ever gone up the same wailing sounds at the approach of death. Cicero complains that the fear of death hung over him like the ever-falling stone of Tantalus; the Mahomedan must expect a long sojourn of torment in the grave before he can enter into the joys of paradise; but especially among the Jews did this overpowering dread of death show itself. The wailing and weeping which are still heard in Hebrew families on the occasion of a death may be traced to the early tradition amongst the Jews, that the "evil spirit" whom they call the Angel of Death had special permission to torment human beings, not only in their dying hour, but even for some time after their decease. The prayer in their litany on the day of atonement was to be delivered from the scourging in the grave by the Angel of Death. Apart, however, from such superstitious appendages, there is quite enough in death itself, if unsolaced by the hopes of the Gospel, to account for the deep-seated feeling of *fear*—to say nothing of the pain and other physical accompaniments of dying. Our very nature chills at the thought of extinguished being, and starts at the thought of destruction. *To be*, and then *cease* to be; to look upon the grave as the dark gulf of annihilation, and to feel that all we have lived and loved and fretted for lies buried there. Such an end to such a way would alone make the sting of death very sharp. But the ordinary circumstances of death constitute a part of its sting. We may have seen a person die, we may have watched the form as it wasted, and the cheeks as they blanched, and the eyes wax dim—we may have seen thought, intelligence, recognition, consciousness, all supplanted by a dreary mimicry of being—neither death nor life; "and to this complexion we must come at last," under what circumstances we know not, but come the time must. We know that; and we fear the wrench, the mystery, the awful loneliness of dying. The veil will fall; but upon us only. We leave all our friends on the other side, while we must make the plunge for ourselves with the Great Unseen, the Great Unknown. O Death, what is thy sting?

But beside the physical circumstances attendant upon death, there enters into our fear of it another element, constituting a far more dreadful part of its sting than any amount of bodily suffering could be. I mean the conviction, which conscience cannot get rid of, that death is a punishment for sin, and is introductory to some further punishment which lies beyond. We have instincts within us which tell us that death is a retributive thing—a diversion from the first intention of our creation—that man has done something to make it necessary; but that originally man was not made to die. What we call "death natural," it has been well said, should rather be called "death unnatural;" death being the reversal of the true law of our being. Hence, in explaining why men are afraid of death, we say it is not nature trembling at what she may have to suffer, so much as conscience affrighted at the penalties it feels to deserve. "We have the sentence of death in ourselves:" that is, of death both as a fact and as a punishment of voluntary transgression. It is as if the law were written in our hearts. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

To this account of death, as contained in the Scripture, some persons have raised strong objections. As against the theological view of death, it has been argued that death is a distinctive attribute of all organized substances, and has left traces of its power over various creatures of the earth, before man had appeared on the surface of the earth. But this in no way militates against the scriptural hypothesis, which supposes that death was the ordained law of being, and a necessity of the terrestrial existence of the lower orders of creation; because, otherwise, they would have multiplied till the earth could not have contained them. But man's existence was never meant to be permanently terrestrial. If he had passed through his probation without reproach and blameless, fulfilling the designs of his creation, and displaying his faculties for a higher state of existence, he might, without taste of death, but only with some new form of spiritual body, have passed at once into the condition of immortality—might have passed peacefully and without pain, like Enoch; or in a fiery chariot, like Elijah; or even in a pavilion of cloud, like Him on whom the men of Galilee gazed with silent awe as He went back into Heaven.

Here, then, is the true answer to the question, "O Death, where is thy sting?" And "what is the sting?" It lies embodied in the holy law of God—the law which we feel to have broken in ten thousand ways, and which is yet inexorable in its demands to have its requirements satisfied. The feeling of this unpaid debt, or of some dark retribution looming in the future if it be not paid, rises up with terrible strength before the imagination when we think we are going to die. Lord Byron once narrowly escaped from drowning; but, recovering himself, he tells us he was struck with the energetic efforts he had instinctively made to preserve life, knowing that in his calm moments he had often wished to die. But St. Paul would have explained why he made those efforts—that his conscience looked much farther than his philosophy, and that it is not in the power of Infidelity itself to blunt or to deaden the sharp sting of death. Now, we call death the King of Terrors, and rightly so; but remember, that which makes him the King of Terrors, that which makes his reign terrible, his night gloomy, his valley dark, his sting intolerable, is the implanted feeling of our nature that he is the commissioned messenger from Heaven, come to reckon with us for our sins. "The wages of sin is death."

But let me pass to the other member of this sublime interrogatory, "O Grave, where is thy victory?" And, first, let us understand clearly what we mean when we speak of the grave. We do not mean the accidental locality in which our mortal remains may rest. This may be fathoms deep beneath the surging wave, or amongst the charred ruins left by some devouring fire, or in the scarcely covered grave dug hastily in the battle-field, or in some picturesque cemetery—its site marked by a tablet which tells of loving memories. Not even with regard to this can the grave claim any victory. The very dust of the saints is precious: there is no destroying it, for a blessing is in it—the memorial of the Incarnation—the seed of Immortality. The grave is only the steward of these acres of sacred dust; and, to the minutest atom, will have to give account at last. Still, not of the few feet of our parent earth does the Apostle speak when he thus apostrophizes the grave. His reference is to that unknown and unseen state of being into which the disembodied spirit passes when it casts off the burden of the flesh; and his mission is to certify to us that, in this extended sense, the grave has no victory; for Christ has the keys of hell—of the invisible world. "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth." Over the issues of life, over the manner and the circumstances of death, over all the passages and localities of the spirit-world, His dominion is supreme. The dying spirit cannot pass into a world where Christ is not, where Christ reigns not, where Christ is not waiting to receive His redeemed ones to Himself. The grave is merely His servant. He speaks and it is done; the fountain of life is sealed; the portals of death are opened; ministering angels await the spirit as it rises. "O Grave, where is thy victory?"

And, then, to present our subject under one other aspect. If the grave can claim no victory at our entrance upon its confines, if it can exercise no lordship over us while we sojourn in its dominions, how is it made to lose its last semblance of triumph when it is made to become the passage-gate to glory and blessedness, and light and life! Yet, to these the grave must introduce us—yea, must be among the means by which we are made meet for our final inheritance. For, is it not written, "Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth other fruit?" Yes, our theology leaves room for the growth of sanctification in the grave-world, though not for penal discipline: for the putting on of beautiful garments, though not for prayers to have filthy garments taken away.

In other ways, the grave becomes the saint's servant. We cannot realize our full consolation and bliss without the redemption of the *body*. We must compel the grave to bring us back the body—to collect bone to bone, and part to part, the changed relics of the scattered body: whether mouldering in the dust under the village yew-tree, or bleaching on the snow of Alpine heights, whether crumbling under world-old pyramids or treasured in the sepulchral urn; all must come together, each to each, in order that, when the Lord Jesus comes from Heaven, He may change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.

And then consider what further happiness the grave, thus despoiled, shall be the means of bringing to us. Again and again has it shut its dark mouth upon all that remained of one that was dear to us as our life; but when the voice goes forth, commanding the all-devouring grave to give up its dead, there shall be a meeting face to face with all those we loved on earth—a meeting only to speak to each other, and to congratulate each other on the common love which called them, the common blood which saved them, the common grace which, all their life's journey through, held their goings out and comings in, the common salvation which shall thenceforth be the theme of their immortal song. Yes, as Peter, and James, and John, knew Moses and Elias on the Mount of Transfiguration, so we shall know our earthly friends in Heaven. The parent who first taught our lips to pray shall be there; and the partner of all life's joys, hopes, cares and sorrows, shall be there; and the child who took obediently all our loving counsels shall be there; and the brother and the sister, and the life-long friend, and the faithful pastor; the master who never forgot he himself had a master in Heaven, and the trusted servant, the brother beloved both in the flesh and in the Lord—all these shall meet in the world where there are no partings, but a spiritual and everlasting life. Oh, brethren, if it be true that such honour have all the saints, and if it be true that the grave is subsidiary to all this—the ordained antecedent to all this—the wicket-gate that leads to all this: I ask, had not the Apostle good ground for throwing out the defiant challenge, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory?"

And now, brethren, if your understanding has been opened to discern the provided ransom; if, notwithstanding all the sins which conscience charges, and even witnesses against your souls—if the voice of God's Spirit, speaking in the name of Jesus, has whispered to you, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," why should you still have any fear either of death or the grave? If the shadow of death be dark, yet it is only a shadow. If the grave be the gate of death, yet it is the gate that leads to life also. Why do we fear that which is in the end to prove the great day. Surely we are living below our privileges, below our Christian professions, below those lofty conceptions which have ever sustained holy men in their dying, and which they found to be fulfilled, and more than fulfilled, the moment the bitterness of death was passed. And ask yourselves, which of all the host of the redeemed, who have passed through the gate of death, would now come back? Would Lazarus return to his poverty? Would John come back to his exile in Patmos? Would Paul resume the care of the churches? Or would David come back to his throne? No. They rejoice—and well they may, that the former things are done away. Their language in life, their testimony in death, their witness in the grave, their anthem in eternity, may all be expressed in the words which have supplied our Easter meditations, "O Death, where is thy sting? O Grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR PLUMPTRE, M.A.,

Prebendary of St. Paul's, and Rector of Pluckley, Kent.

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ASHFORD, KENT,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1872.

"*Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine: every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which He hath given thee.*"—Dueteronomy xvi, 13, 17.

One who writes, in a later age, the history of the Church of England during this nineteenth century will note, if I mistake not, among all its sad records of controversy, and strife, and wasted power, some signs of life and hope. There have broken through the old routine, new Tables of Lessons, new Hymn-books, a new elasticity in the use of the Prayer Book, which have helped to make the worship of the Church more of a reality. Churches built, restored, decorated for special seasons have borne their witness, that the beauty of holiness has an outward as well as an inward form, and that Art also in its highest forms, has her appointed ministry in worship. Music has spread far and wide over the land, and choral services, Eucharistic hymns, and melodies, more jubilant and joyous have given a brightness to worship which our father's knew not. The highest act of devotion is not always now the coldest and most lifeless part of it. And among these tokens of a new and hopeful energy, we may give a high place to those Harvest Festivals which have become so prominent in our Church life during the last twenty or thirty years. It is not merely that they are an improvement on the old Harvest-home suppers with their strong beer, and coarse songs, and over-rough mirth; but that the Church has manifested in them the vitality of spontaneous action. There is no provision for them in the Prayer Book. They do not come under the Act of Uniformity, or any other law of the land. So for as I know, there is no precedent for them in the history of the English Church or in that of Primitive Christendom. And yet, step by step, first as an experiment tried, it may be, with hesitation amid the distrust and suspicion, reproduced here and there, which always attach to every departure from the beaten track, they have won their way and become what we call an institution. We look for their return almost as naturally as we look for Christmas. So the Church has shewn that she possesses, deprived as she may be, of the means of formal legislative action, the power to ordain, as well as to change and abolish rites and ceremonies. So she has met the unexpressed wants of men and mingled herself with their common life, and shewn that her sympathies are wider than those of sects and parties.

The more we think over the meaning of these Harvest Festivals, the more I believe, we shall see that they bear a witness which this age of ours specially needs, and ought therefore specially to welcome. And this in many ways.

First, they tell us of the truth which we are constantly tempted to forget. We too often think of the Church of Christ as existing only for the elect few;—of Christ Himself only as the Saviour of many or of few, from sin and from the penalty of sin; of the Father as bearing that name only for those who are His children by the special grace of adoption. We lose sight of the fact that the God of grace is also the God of nature, that the Son of God is also the Divine Word, the Eternal Wisdom, by whom all laws of Nature are ordained; and the whole universe governed and preserved; that the Holy Ghost is also the Lord, and Giver of life, the Spirit of God that moved upon the face of the waters and quickened them into countless forms of life; that not only are all holy thoughts and good desires His gifts, but that even the skill of the artist and the builder speak of a wisdom for all manner of workmanship which is His gift (Exodus xxxv, 31). That even in the work of the ploughman and the engineer, we may see that which "cometh forth from the Lord of Hosts which is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working" (Isaiah xxviii, 23, 29).

Harvest Festivals then are valuable as placing our religion upon a wider basis than that of a self-absorbed anxiety about ourselves; and helping us to look out on the world of nature and of men, with more large hearted sympathies.

But, Secondly, they bear their witness also as a protest against error of another kind. There is a growing tendency among the thinkers of our time, to consider that all the phenomena that make up our natural life, seed-time and harvest, sickness and health, plenty and famine, drought and the plague of waters, are brought about by blind mechanical forces, operating under laws, that neither man nor God Himself can modify or direct. So that the calamities and the blessings which fill men's hearts with gladness or with sorrow, are looked upon as being influenced by no prayer, and calling for no thanksgiving; and all that man can do is to fold his arms in patient acceptance of the mingled good and evil, which make up life as his inevitable lot, or to claim for himself a power which he denies to God, and to put forth the strength of his own hand, and the energy of his own will, to make the material world around him and the forces that act upon it, work together for his good.

Our gathering to-night proclaims that we do not accept that cold and cheerless Creed. We welcome all fresh discoveries of the laws by which the universe is governed. We do not shrink from the belief that law is wider and more far-reaching than our father's knew—that rain and drought, pestilence and health, are dependent upon laws which as yet we see but as in a glass darkly. But we believe also that those laws are the expression of an Almighty will; and are operative only through its continuous energy, and that that is the will of our Father in heaven; and therefore we accept its workings, not with simple submission but with thankfulness and trust. In some minds that trust may be so absolute as to think it wiser and more reverent to desire nothing but that, which God thinks fit to send them—to ask not for rain or sunshine—but only, that whatever God gives, may work together for their highest and Eternal good. They have learnt to be content—and to say, "Not my will, but Thine be done"—to believe that He who feeds the ravens and clothes the lillies of the field, is not unmindful of His children.

> "They feel at heart that one above,
> In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
> Is working for the best.'

I cannot blame that simple and childlike faith. It comes nearest to that temper, which is not careful what it shall eat or what it shall drink, or wherewithal it shall be clothed; but seeks first for the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and believes that all else that it needs shall be added unto it. It rebukes the selfish anxiety, the half-suppressed distrust, the heathen thoughts of God, as one whose will may be controlled by man's much-speaking, which too often mingle themselves with our prayers for temporal blessings. But it is well that we should remember that it is also natural and child-like, to make known to our Father in Heaven, the wants, and even the wishes of our hearts; knowing how much our spiritual depends upon our natural life; how the changes that affect our body, may mar or help our faith and hope in God; how the well-being of the Church is affected by that of the nation, which, in the truest sense, is one with it; how her power to serve her Lord in all godly quietness, varies in proportion as the peace and stability of kingdoms are maintained in their equilibrium; it is surely right, as beyond all doubt it is the natural instinct of the heart, to bring these things also into its supplications before the throne of Grace. We do not ask that laws may be broken for our sake; but that their joint action may be so adjusted, that they may work out for us, and for those for whom we pray, the Divine purposes of Love. Underneath all uttered prayers there is the implied condition, "If it be possible: nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done." Subject to that condition the highest type of prayer—a prayer given, let us remember, to peasants and fishermen, who could take words, not with some mystical significance, in their common meaning—includes the petition, "Give us this day our daily bread." St. Paul, in the midst of all his absolute conviction, that God orders all things well, can yet give his counsel, that men should "In everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make their requests known to God." In regard to all spiritual blessings certainly, and, therefore, it may well be in temporal things that affect our spiritual life, prayer and the answer to prayer, are themselves subject to a law; and that law is, "Ask and ye shall have; seek and ye shall find." This witness, then, is borne by Harvest Festivals. If we have prayed throughout the year that our God would give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so that in due time we might enjoy them, we do well to acknowledge that He in His goodness and wisdom, by laws which we know and on which we act; by laws which we know not, but which we believe to be fixed and far-reaching; by the exercise of a will which is above, but not against law, has granted us, in such measure as is good for us, the things which we desired. But beyond this they work out for us a great good, and remind us of yet other truths we are sometimes in danger of forgetting.

Thirdly. We think those who are, or deem themselves religious, wisest of all—that the labours of the husbandman and the joys of harvest, are things of the earth earthy, having hardly any contact with the knowledge of God and the higher life of the soul. St. Paul did not think so. When he spoke to the men of Lystra, it was to declare that God had not left himself without witness among them, giving them rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness. Those poor tillers of the soil had not been outcasts from the everlasting love. The labour of their hands and their natural mirth, their joy in harvest time and songs of vintage, had not been unacceptable to Him whom they ignorantly worshipped. So far as they sinned against the law written in their hearts, they sank deeper and deeper into that ignorance. Their "foolish heart was darkened," even as our hearts are when we sin against a clearer revelation; but the truth remains, that though raised above them, we and they, share the same nature, are placed under the same laws, are children of the same Father, redeemed by the same Lord. We must not think of any human interests as alien to us. The common lot of toil and of rest is the same for all. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening." For all, there are the same natural ties, the same life of home, the same joys and sorrows, the same temptations and sins, the same victories and defeats, dimly and seen far off, the same hopes and fears for the more distant future.

Fourthly. Yet more do gatherings such as these bring us into fellowship with the old religious life of Israel. Those three great feasts of theirs, the Passover, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles, were not only commemorative of national blessings bestowed on them and on their fathers —or prophetic of yet greater spiritual blessings to be bestowed upon the Church of Christ. But they were conspicuously, and of set purpose connected with the three great seasons of the tillage of Palestine, with the Barley Harvest, the Wheat Harvest, and the Vintage. At the Passover, a sheaf of the first fruits of the harvest was brought to the priest, and he was to wave it before the Lord. Until that solemn oblation of thanksgiving had been made, they were not to eat of bread, or parched corn, or green ears of the ripening crop. Seven weeks were reckoned, and then the barley harvest was over and the wheat was ripe; and this time they offered not the half-ripened ears, but loaves of fine flour, as the first fruits unto the Lord. The summer passed and autumn came on, and the vintage was gathered, and the winepress was trodden. The cycle of the seasons was completed, the produce of the year was stored, and it was, therefore, the Feast of Ingathering of Israel. And of all feasts in the year it was the most joyous, being the Harvest Festival and the Christmas of the Church of Israel. Houses were bright with branches of palm and olive, and myrtle and pine. They made themselves bowers in their courtyards, and on the roofs of their houses. Fathers and children, brothers and sisters, met together and renewed the ties of home. Seven palm-branches were placed upright on the altar. The victims that were led to the altar were decked with wreaths of flowers. The worshippers came with green boughs in their hands, with citrons or peaches in the midst. The priests, arrayed in white, went to the fountain and drew water, as from the well of salvation, and poured it fourth before the Lord. In the evening houses were illuminated, men and women walked to and fro with torches in their hands and a great lamp in the large court of the temple shed its light over the streets and lanes of the City. It adds to the interest with which we think of this rejoicing—to the sanction which it gives to all like expressions in enlivened art and beauty of form or colour—to remember that one large and important part of our Lord's teaching was connected with it. The history of one Feast of Tabernacles occupies no less than four chapters (7—10) of St. John's Gospel. Its ritual was present to the eyes of men, and to His own thoughts, when He stood and cried, "I am the light of the world. If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

But above and beyond all other marks of joy and utterance of thanksgiving, the law laid stress on the thank offerings of love. The law, "Freely ye have received, freely give," applies to the natural as well as to the spiritual life; and there can be no true fulfilment in the latter, if it is neglected in the former. Men were not to appear before the Lord empty. The cheap religion of the lips, when the heart was cold and the hands were closed, was, and is an abomination in God's sight. All feasts in Israel were therefore, to be days of liberality as well as gladness. Men were not "to appear before the Lord empty." They were to remember that they had themselves been bondsmen, and, therefore, ought to sympathize and help those who were still in bondage. They were to do what in them lay, to bridge over the chasm made between one man and his fellows, by the inevitable distinction of riches and of rank; and their slaves and handmaids were to share as in the rest of the Sabbath, so in the joy of the harvest and vintage. Above all, the thoughtless, the homeless wanderer, without a home and without a friend, and the widow and the orphan, were committed to their care. "They shall not appear before the Lord empty. Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God, which He hath given thee."

If that, my friends and brothers, was the law of Israel, how much more is it the law of Christ? How unreal and hollow is such a service as this—if there is no act of love proportionately to our means towards those who need it—no thank-offering, as well as the utterance of thanksgiving. Without that, the adornment of our churches, good as it is in itself, is a pitiable pageantry, and our Psalms and Hymns are but the acting of a part which is not ours in the sight of Him before whom all hearts lie bare, and who hates hypocrisy. You who are met together to-night, will shew, I trust, that you hate it also. Not the grudging gift, not the smallest coin which the purse happens to contain; but something commensurate with each man's income, station, liabilities—something which he saves by surrendering some idle task, some needless luxury.

The objects to which you are asked to give, come in the strictest sense within the letter and the spirit of the law of Israel and of the law of Christ. The sick and suffering poor, to whom are offered the attendance, the comforts, and the quiet, which they cannot have in their own homes. The orphans, who would otherwise be cast adrift upon the world, left without a friend, to swell the ranks of the dangerous classes, at the best without the guidance and the training of a home, these may surely plead that they have a claim on those who are healthy and strong who live in comfortable houses, and who prosper and have riches in possession. That the hospital is at your own doors—mainly founded by a townsman of your own, whose labours, in a like cause, at a crisis of unparalleled difficulty, have won for him the thanks of Europe. That the orphanage is founded by the wife of our Archbishop, who began it for the children that were left fatherless during the cholera year in London, and has carried it on since to its present permanent and organised condition. This strengthens the cause for which I plead, if any such strength be needed. I cannot doubt that the harvest of this Harvest Festival, will be plenteous and abundant, worthy of the place, the season, and the cause.

Note.—The institutions referred to as the objects for which support was asked, were:—(1) the Cottage Hospital at Ashford, mainly founded by Mr. John Furley; and (2) the Orphanage at Stonehouse, in the Isle of Thanet, founded and carried on by Mrs. Tait.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 45.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR JOWETT, M.A.,

Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

PREACHED IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 30, 1872.

"*God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?*" Romans iii, 6.

The simplest truths of Religion are also the deepest and most inexhaustible. They are everywhere around us, like the air we breathe, and yet we are hardly conscious of their presence. They seem to grow up in us naturally by the light of reason and conscience. They are the established beliefs of the Age or Country in which we live. All men are agreed in holding them, and there is nothing new to be said about them. They may be summed up in three or four propositions which nobody can deny.

As for example, "God is just; God is true; God governs the world by fixed laws; He is the Author of our being; He knows and sees all things." And yet these simple propositions seem always in danger of being lost. They become truisms or common-places; they are laid upon the shelf and exercise no influence over our lives. The most trifling controversy of the day has a deeper interest for us than the great question of all religion—the *nature* and *character* of God.

Few persons have ever enquired into the evidence supplied by our own nature, and by the course of the world, of the manner of God's dealings with men; and while holding a belief in the Divine perfection in a lazy unmeaning way, they have allowed all sorts of other beliefs to spring up in their minds which are practically inconsistent with this. They have not said, "No, that is impossible because it contradicts Divine Justice; this is impossible because it contradicts Divine Truth;" or in the more impetuous language of the Apostle "Yea, let God be true but every man a liar," or "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" These are the tests to which all systems of theology must at last be brought; the human, or rather Divine ideas of truth and right, of goodness and love.

I propose to speak in this sermon of our simplest conceptions of the Divine Nature. And, first, I will consider what these are, and how far they can be said to accord with our experience of the world; and secondly, I will shew how the primary conceptions of God have been violated, not only in the religions of the Gentiles, but in the ideas of the Divine Nature which have been held by Christian teachers; and thirdly, I will point out how to this we must return, as the final result of all our search after knowledge of Divine things, that they are the fixed principles or anchors of the soul, which hold us fast amidst the waves of time, in life and in death.

As I have already remarked, there will be no great difference about the language in which we shall describe the Divine Being. We use words derived from our ideas of human goodness because we have no others, but while we would admit that they are applied to God in a transcendent sense—transferred, that is, from the finite to the Infinite—we would insist that they have essentially the same meaning in both uses of them. For example, when we say that "God is just," we do not mean to attribute to Him a quality which is the reverse of human Justice, but only more perfect, such as is proper to One who knows all the circumstances of every case and has therefore a sort of infinite equity in dealing with them. When we ascribe any of these epithets to God, we mean to affirm that He does not at any rate fall short of the qualities denoted by them in the ordinary human sense of the words. That is the standard to which we can refer the nature of God by our own moral ideas. If we cast a doubt upon this we are altogether at sea; under the name of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ we are worshipping an unknown God, of whom we catch occasional glimpses, flashing through the mists and storms which envelop Him.

There is a question that the ancient philosophers were very fond of raising, "*Whether there was one virtue or many?*" They meant to ask, whether all the different virtues were derived from one principle? So we might ask, whether there is one attribute of God, or many? And we might sum up all in one word, Divine Perfection. If we were further to analyze this we should attribute to God first, knowledge and power, which seem to be different aspects of the same quality, for to know all things is to be able to do them. Secondly, we should attribute to Him truth and justice, which are similarly connected, for truth is the foundation of justice. Thirdly, we should attribute to Him goodness; not that easy-going temper or character which sometimes passes under the name among men, but the everlasting purpose that all His creatures shall be good even as He is good. Though He might judge and punish them, in this life or in another, and this might be the effect of the fixed laws by which He governs them, yet we must feel confident that He provides a way by which these punished ones shall not be utterly expelled from Him, and that He who has the *power* would also have the *will* to restore man to Himself. Or, as the Apostle says "So then God concluded all men under sin that He might have mercy upon them all." The mediæval Saints would have spoken of what they termed the "enjoyment of God;" and certainly there is great comfort in the thought of the Divine Perfection, to the good when they are overpowered by the evil of the world; and to the evil also as soon as they feel any desire to cast aside the burden of sin and become conscious that there is a way by which they can be saved. The thought of this perfection might kindle raptures in other minds, such as found utterance in the hymns of the Psalmist, "I will love Thee oh Lord my strength; I will praise Thee with my whole heart;" or it might arouse such a sense of confidence and truth as is expressed in the words "The Lord is my life and my salvation;" or in that yet deeper strain which is heard in the ninetieth Psalm "Lord Thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another; before the mountains were brought forth or ever the earth and the world were made, Thou art God from everlasting, and world without end;" or, might give us such a sense of peace as is expressed in the words "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me, Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me."

This is the language which the Psalmist uses in all the circumstances of his life. He feels that God is ever present with him. In all the higher and nobler thoughts which possess his mind, he recognises the Divine inspiration. But this is not the language of our hearts; we have not the same joyous confidence in God. At least there are few persons who would be able to find in those words which I have just quoted, the natural expression of their feelings, partly because we interpose His laws between ourselves and Him, and seem to imagine that He is being hidden from us when He is really being revealed to us. With how much wider knowledge, and how much deeper feeling can the modern astronomer look up to the stars and say "When I consider the heavens which are the work of Thy hands, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him!"

But there is another reason that lies deeper still, for the truth is that our minds are partly clouded over by the doubt—the same that pressed upon the mind of the author of the book of Ecclesiastes—caused by the existence of Evil in the world. How is this evil to be accounted for? How is Divine Perfection reconcilable with the misery of our poor; or the vice of our criminals; with the disease and wretchedness we see everywhere around us; with the crushing misfortunes which sometimes oppress the good; and with the tendency to actual evil, which the good find in their own hearts? These are the difficulties which press upon us; difficulties which some persons use as an argument why we should believe *everything,* and others as an argument why we should believe *nothing.*

Men often advance the most monstrous doctrines respecting the character and actions of God, and when reason and nature alike seem to rebel against some of these assumptions, they reply "How then do you account for the existence of evil?" Here is a difficulty which cannot be lightly set aside either in speculation, or in practice. Whether the man thinks or feels, *there* is the dead weight hanging about his neck, *there* is the shadow darkening his life which needs to be removed. Is our conception of God to be framed according to the image that exists within us, or to be derived from our experience of evil in the world? That is the question my brethren. It is an old difficulty which is not now broached for the first time, and a question to which we cannot expect to have a full or complete answer in this life, because the purposes of God towards us are only revealed in part. But although unable wholly to master this difficult question, I think we may see the direction in which the answer is to be sought. For, first of all, we have no business to say that God either causes or permits evil, but only that He governs the world by fixed laws, within the limit of which good and evil display themselves. He has made the world to be a sort of theatre in which men act their parts. If you say that individuals are sacrificed to the working of those laws, are you not thinking too much of this life only, and not considering that there may be other states of being in which the meanest creatures here—the cripples, the paupers, the criminals—may have another chance given them,—if I may use such an expression,—and start for another goal, in the race for which the last here shall then become first, and the first shall be last. Believing in the existence of a God, and comparing our own happiness with the condition of the poor and suffering we see around us, we cannot "justify the ways of God to man" without maintaining that there must be more than appears to us now, and for that reason as well as for others we look forward to a future life.

But, secondly, we feel that good is inseparable from evil, and we can form no distinct conception of the one apart from the other. Both seem to flow equally from the free agency of man, and if we deny the existence of evil we shall be compelled to deny the existence of good. This shews that we must control our ideas, and that some part of the difficulty lies in the word; for if instead of speaking of the existence of evil in the world, we were to speak of "degrees of perfection," that part of the terror due to the influence of the word would be lost, and ignorance would no longer be allowed to stand over us like a hard task-master, asserting the existence of good and of evil, and asking us to draw our own conclusion.

But still, evil under whatever name is a reality which cannot be got rid of by any new use of language; and though I am afraid of seeming to carry you too far away from home, there is another consideration to which I would wish to draw your attention. It is not the mere *existence* of evil in the world, but the *amount* of evil in the world which really depresses us, and seems like a load too heavy to be lifted up; and if we could realize to ourselves that the purposes of God are known only in part, not merely as regards another life but also as regards this life; if we could imagine that the evil, and disorder, we see around us are but as steps in the progress towards order and perfection, then our conception of evil would be greatly changed. Geology tells us of remote ages when animals wandered over the earth, and when man as yet was not. It tells us also of ages longer, and more distant still, when there was no breath, or movement of living creature either on land or in sea; so slowly and by so many steps did the earth which we inhabit attain to the fulness of life which we see around us. I might go on and speak of our world as it is, a mere pebble in the vast ocean of space; as no more in its relation to the Universe than the least is to the greatest, or than the pebble is to the whole earth. But that we may not become dizzy in thinking about these things I would ask you now to consider the bearing of such reflections, which are simply matters of fact, upon our present subject They tend to show us how very small a part, not only of the physical but of the moral world, is really known to us; they suggest that the evil and suffering we see around us may be only the beginning of a higher state of being to be realized during countless ages in the history of man. The progress we have hitherto attained and of which we think so much, from barbarism to civilization, from ancient to modern times, may be as nothing compared with that which God has destined for the human race. And if we were living in those happier times we should think no more of the miseries through which some of us had arrived at that higher state of being, than we now think of some bad dream, or of some trifling aberration or perversity of our childhood, when we have grown up to perfect man. "But perhaps some one would say, I would rather not be deluded with the prospect of an indefinite Future, ten, twenty, or thirty thousand years hence, when I see evil and wretchedness at my own door, and in my own home. At this very hour in which we are here assembled, there are thousands of hapless beings to whom life is a burden. How would the Millenium of which you speak benefit them?" I will only repeat what I said before, that *this world would be the most unjust of world's if there were no other.* But there is another reflection which is nearer than that. The evil, the misery, the physical degradation you see around you; you who are so much moved at the spectacle have the power of mitigating, relieving, and preventing. This Millenium which appears so far off may be brought by you into your own neighbourhood, and at this present hour, as well as in a remote age or a future life. You may breathe an inspiration of goodness from another land which will drive away the pestilence; for God has not left us in this world helpless to contend against the power of evil, but has endowed us with the capacity of resisting evil, and of removing from or altering the circumstances out of which evil grows. But do not let us devote too much care to seeing how we can get rid of these circumstances of evil; rather let us see how we can fulfil the purposes with regard to which God has allowed evil to exist. This is the best answer to the difficulty,—we can remove evil; the best practical answer for those actively engaged in doing good to others; and here we realize that Divine image of the Saviour which is presented to us by reason and by conscience.

It seems to be a harder task now to think of God than formerly, because we can no longer think of Him as the God of our own Church only, or of our own Nation, but of the whole earth; nor of this earth merely but of myriads of other worlds. Yet in all ages, the ages of credulity and faith, as well as the ages of reason and enquiry, the minds of men have been struggling after God, if haply they might find Him. The ancient Greek first thought he saw God in the likeness of man, not better but greater than himself; then as Fate, then as Mind, whose providential interference was introduced to meet a difficulty and who was not so much the just Governor of men as the occasional Avenger of injustice. Then came the philosopher who taught that God was Good and the Author of Good; that He was true and had no occasion to deceive; yet he had no conception of a God who was the God of all the nations of the earth. Slowly and partially in the decline of Greek and Roman systems, when the different streams of human thought were beginning to meet and mingle, the wiser part of the Gentile world became dimly conscious that God was not the God of the Greeks and Romans only, but of all mankind. Even in the Scriptures if we read them attentively we shall find a similarly progressive revelation of the Divine Nature. In the childhood of the world, we are told, *God walked in the garden and talked with Adam,* but in the New Testament we are distinctly told *that no man hath seen God at any time.* In the book of Exodus we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and in the book of Genesis that He tempted Abraham; in the New Testament we are told again that God hath tempted no man. Again, in the Old Testament, we find both the earlier and the later notion, first that God visits the sins of the father upon the children, and afterwards in the Prophets a twice repeated contradiction. Our Lord, too, twice rebuked His followers for suggesting that temporal calamities were sent as punishments for the sins of others; first when He used the words "Think ye that those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?" And again, in the case of the man born blind, when the question was put to Him "Lord, which did sin, this man or his parents?" Slowly, indeed, have men attained to that limited insight into the ways of God of which the human mind only seems capable. Again and again have they discovered, as they believed, inconsistencies in truth which have caused them to lapse into error. "How, say they, can we, when thinking of God as the God of Truth, believe that He will interpose a fiction between Himself and us? Or, how can we suppose that He who is a Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, will make our eternal salvation dependent upon the performance of a single external act? Or, how can a just God punish us for what we never did; for what, in fact, another did; for that mere tendency to evil which is inherent in the nature that He has given us? How could that most sorrowful spectacle that ever was seen upon earth,—for which we may say in a figure, that the world has been mourning ever since,—have given any pleasure or satisfaction to Him? Does God remedy one injustice by another, or can He inflict a disproportionate punishment upon any of His creatures? The good of Society and the improvement of the offenders are the avowed objects of all human "punishments; shall we attribute to the Most Merciful a darker purpose of which we hardly venture to speak, or to think? Or rather should we not thankfully acknowledge that His plans for the improvement of man are more perfect and consistent than any human scheme of discipline?"

The changes which have already taken place in the religious belief of Christians undoubtedly incline us to argue that there will be other changes by which Religion and Morality will be more perfectly reconciled Many dark clouds of superstition hung about the early ages of the Church, and some of them are hanging about her still. Many opinions were held by the best of men in the Nicene Church from which the human mind now shrinks with horror and amazement. Who can believe that the unbaptized infant is consigned to everlasting perdition? *And yet this was once the orthodox faith of the Christian Church!* Who can hear without trembling that one mortal sin consciously committed after baptism almost, if not altogether, excluded the sinner from the hope of salvation? No wonder that men put off baptism to the hour of death! But what a conception of the Nature of God and the Religion of Christ does such a practice imply!

Who is not surprised when he reads that the satisfaction of Christ for the sins of men was originally understood to be a sacrifice to the Devil, and not to God! And strangest of all perhaps, the least error in the use of a word seems to have been thought more displeasing to God than the greatest perfidy or cruelty of Emperors, or the corruption of cities, or churches. In the ancient Abyssinian Church—which by some has been thought to have retained the primitive discipline more than any other—a solemn form of words was repeated on certain days of the year. The name of the author of the words, and the origin of the custom were alike unknown. The words were supposed to have been translated out of some other language. The meaning of several of the words in the ancient document was uncertain and texts were quoted from the Abyssinian Scriptures in support of them which were not to be found in the older and better copies. Nevertheless the use of that form of words, admitted to be of such uncertain interpretation and authority was enforced by the most tremendous anathemas, which were uttered by the whole people, and *all* who did not believe what *none* of them could wholly understand, were devoted by them to eternal damnation. Sometimes these anathemas were rolled forth to the pealing of the organ, and sometimes the innocent voice of a child might have been heard repeating them. The Patriarch of the Abyssinian Church had often wished to put an end to this scandal, for he acknowledged that the words were not taken in their natural sense, but ecclesiastical customs are very tenacious and apt to be continued long after they are disproved by Reason and Conscience.

My brethren, I want to point out to you that if we insist upon retaining all we have received from antiquity we shall insensibly impair the Divine image in the soul. Religion and Morality will part company more and more, and we shall either cease to believe in God and a Future State, altogether, or become the victims of any superstition. We cannot draw near to God if we think of Him only as a Being who watches over us in this world, but leaves us to our fate in another. I am aware that some persons may be displeased with me for speaking in this way, but they would be equally displeased if I were to describe the state of hell in the language of Tertullian or some of the ancient fathers; or the writings of that Spanish friar which some of us may have read as translated in the works of Jeremy Taylor. Still more justly would they be displeased, if I were to apply their own doctrine to some one very near and dear to them who had led a careless life, and died making no sign of repentance. And yet it is surely a dangerous thing to hold as religious Truth at a distance, that which we refuse to believe when it is brought near to us; to begin by violating our first notion of the attributes of God upon the slender ground of some doubtful interpretation of isolated texts of Scripture, and then,—as if such doctrines were too dreadful to be entertained seriously,—to lay them aside when they begin to be applied to practice. For indeed the thought of God is awful enough to us without adding on terrific and unmeaning consequences. We do not suppose that God is like some foolish father who lets his children escape the punishment which would be for their improvement for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." We know that the will and purpose of God is that we should become like Him; that we should put off the garment of self and put on the Lord Jesus Christ in righteousness and true holiness.

Nor can we imagine that this is to be accomplished except by the exertion of our own wills co-operating with His will. And when we think of our own salvation, of our absorption in the things of this world, and our averseness to those of another, we feel that this is a great and protracted work, which cannot be accomplished without many a struggle and many sharp pangs, which might be described in Scripture language as the dividing of the body from the spirit. For however we speak of that state of probation in which mankind, or the majority of them are to have one more chance, and then to be cast aside for ever; or of that education which is to begin here, and be continued on through countless ages, yet we are all agreed upon this that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The impure must become pure; the untrue must become simple and true, and the thought of God must take the place of the thought of self. There must be no more hatred or party spirit, that "last infirmity of noble minds." The tangle of our own character must be unwoven, and woven again before we can appear in His presence.

When we think of another life which is the second great truth of religion, in the light of the attributes of God, we have a feeling of awe, and also a feeling of comfort. We know that God will see us as we truly are, and that though in one way we are not fit to meet His searching eye, yet we know also that He will take into account all the circumstances of our lives. We are conscious that He is infinitely above us, and that no thought of ours can comprehend Him, but as we would rather be judged here by a great and good man than one of a meaner sort, so we would rather fall, as was said of old, into the hands of God than the hands of man. We know too that a Perfect God can have no other aim or purpose than the perfection of His creatures, if that be possible. The systems of men do not terrify us. All their wild denunciations of one another, whether in this or in former ages could scarcely last a thousand years, and we know that in them is not always to be found the mind of Christ. We can rise however above these, into the clearer atmosphere of the Justice and Goodness of God.

But what must strike us all, I do not say with fear, but with awe, is this, that in that other world about which we know so little, we have no one upon whom we can rely but upon God only. Let us therefore sometimes be alone with Him in this world, for the time will come when we shall be alone with Him.

A Sermon

BY THE

VENERABLE ARCHDEACON SINCLAIR,

Vicar, of Kensington,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH, KENSINGTON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 1, 1872.

"*The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.*"—Psalm ix, 17.

The expression "all the people that forget God" is very remarkable. We might have expected the Psalmist to say, that all the people shall be turned into hell who *resist* God, who take His name in vain, who violate His law, injure their fellow creatures, and degrade or debase themselves. But in our text something further is implied; mere "forgetfulness" of God is declared to be a sufficient reason why the forgetful individual should incur the fearful penalty here denounced.

The train of thought thus suggested to us is to consider the various reasons why we ought to have God in our remembrance.

He is our Creator. "It is He that hath made us and not we ourselves;" "we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture." We owe everything to Him, our powers of body and faculties of mind, our time, our substance, our friends, patrons or dependants, everything that gives us either comfort or hope is from Him; and therefore everything we possess continually admonishes us to be mindful of Him. *The heavens declare His glory; the firmament sheweth His handy work; the earth is full of His riches, the sea is His, and He made it.* It is therefore the most ungrateful blindness and stupidity not to see God in His works, to receive from Him all things richly to enjoy, and not to thank Him; to have continually before us evidences without number of His wisdom, power and goodness, and wilfully to shut our eyes that we may not see them. Such is the folly and perverseness of forgetting our Creator.

But God is also our Redeemer. Man had sinned; man had lost original righteousness and had become corrupt and degraded.

In himself he had no means of recovery, he had no capacity of amendment and salvation. In this deplorable emergency the Father of mercies looked down upon him with compassion. God loved His disobedient children, notwithstanding their disobedience—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish but have everlasting life." What a fearful want of spiritual sensibility, not to think of, not to be grateful for, not to render thanks for this inestimable mercy! How is it that the redeemed children whom God loves, and has done so much for, can actually forget Him?

But, further, God is our Sanctifier. We are not only guilty and liable to a punishment, which we could not ourselves avert, but we are also in a state of frailty from which we could not by any innate power effect our deliverance. In the pointed language of our liturgy—"We have no power of ourselves to help ourselves." In this emergency God in mercy interposes to save us. He sends His Holy Spirit to quicken us, to heal us, to strengthen us, to sanctify us, to uphold us; to give us *fitness for the kingdom of God, meekness* for the inheritance of the saints in light. These operations of our Divine Sanctifier are daily and continual; they are not merely figurative, but actual workings within us, imparting to us holy desires, and good counsels, and inclining us to do just works. When we know that this is the blessed purpose for which the Holy Ghost is sent, and that these are the benignant operations, which, if we pray for them, and do not resist them, will take effect in our whole souls, how can we forget God our Sanctifier?

I have still to add that God is our Judge. He is "about our path and about our bed and spieth out all our ways." He records in the book of His remembrance everything we think or say or do, and at the Last Day when the dead, small and great, shall stand before Him, He will bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good or bad. If we beheld the hand employed in taking down this awful record, we could not avert our eyes; our entire thoughts would be absorbed; the tremendous consequences throughout Eternity, the anticipation of the great and dreadful day, when that record will be read aloud before men and angels, would exclude all other subjects of contemplation.

The sin of not remembering God as our Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier and Judge, is not only an evidence of actual moral depravity, but is a source of still deeper moral degradation. When religion and the fear of God are wanting, the great safeguard of virtue and morality is withdrawn. When temptation comes the power of resistance is reduced almost to nothing. Divine grace cannot be expected by the man who has so often resisted it, that "God is not in all his thoughts." The association of ideas in such a mind becomes continually more worldly. The very circumstances and events, which to a religious man suggest religious thoughts, are in him associated with thoughts entirely different. They are earthly, sensual, or even worse.

(2.) Thus far, my brethren, we have considered the reasons why we ought to have God in our remembrance, let us next proceed to consider by what means the great spiritual evil referred to in the text, namely, forgetfulness of God, may be removed. We may begin by adverting to the public ordinances of religion. It has pleased Almighty God, with a view of keeping up a remembrance of Himself throughout the earth, to institute a day of weekly rest, specially devoted to His worship and service. The bell which summons Christians throughout the world to the Sanctuary, is an audible and sufficiently intelligible admonition not to forget God. It is a summons constantly repeated, and undeniably significant. It virtually proclaims—"He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

Nor is it only by public ordinances that God reminds us of Himself. He speaks to us in His word. He has caused "all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning." If we forget Him it is because we do not read that Book of Life. We there learn what God is, what are His attributes and perfections: what we are, what are our relations to Him, and what the retributions which await us in another life. These most important of all imaginable communications are made to us in a style worthy of the momentous subject. It is God who speaks to us in the Bible, and His language is worthy of Himself. Who that reads it can fail to have Him in remembrance?

It is not, however, in His Word only that God reminds us of Himself, but also in His works. He is not only the God of grace and of revelation, but the God of nature. Every object above us and around us is of His creation, and bears the impress of His power, wisdom and goodness. So far from forgetting God, a right minded observer exclaims with the devout Psalmist "I have set God always before me; He is on my right hand and therefore I shall not be moved." The sun shining in his strength, the moon walking in her brightness, the stars pouring down their light from the remotest regions of space, the hills and valleys teeming with fertility, and the exhaustless treasures of the deep, all unite in inviting us to contemplate, to acknowledge and adore their Divine Creator.

The minutest, and to all appearance most insignificant objects, join with the grandest and mightiest in this call to Divine praise. The smallest and almost imperceptible insects are manifestations of Divine contrivance not less marvellous than the largest Sea-serpent or Leviathan. The *hyssop* that *springeth out of the wall,* is as curious a specimen of vegetable mechanism as the oak of the forest or the cedar of Lebanon. All things, great and small, in all places bear testimony to their Creator: consequently they testify against us, if we neglect or forget Him.

Thus far with reference to the works of Nature: I have next to add, that our contemplation of the works of Providence forbids us to forget God. Under the Divine government there is a continual tendency in virtue to happiness, and in vice to misery. Prudence, temperance, honesty, meekness and contentment, lead in general to prosperity and happiness; while on the other hand the opposite vices tend to adversity and wretchedness. We see these results every day of our lives. We cannot take up a newspaper without reading incidents, which manifestly betoken the Providential hand. Sometimes the cases are so startling, that we unavoidably exclaim; *this* hath *God wrought; for we perceive that it is His work.* The chain of circumstances, by which a guilty individual who has committed crime with surprising dexterity, secrecy and ingenuity, is after all exposed and brought to justice, proclaims to us the finger of God. And on the other hand, the combination of particulars, by which the innocence of an unjustly accused person is sometimes surprisingly made known, are to every one *that hath ears to hear,* a manifest token of Divine goodness.

I must add one further mode of keeping up the remembrance of God—it is private prayer. We cannot, surely, forget God if we kneel down habitually to address Him. Our prayers, therefore, like the prayers of David, should come up before Him as the incense, and the lifting up of our hands at the evening sacrifice. Every morning of our lives therefore we are to reckon up upon our knees, all the various mercies, spiritual and temporal, which we owe to the Divine bounty, and should offer up our humble thanks. Anticipating the trials and dangers of the day before us, we ought earnestly to implore the Divine guidance and protection: and when the day is over, we should examine ourselves as to our feelings and conduct during the hours that are passed, commending our households and families, our friends, our fellow-citizens and fellow creatures to His providential care, and lying down to rest in full assurance that there is a Father and Protector of all, One who neither slumbers nor sleeps. Surely, my brethren, it cannot be imagined that the individual practising habitually such devotions should forget God.

Having thus far adverted to the means by which we are to retain God in our devout remembrance, I proceed to one or two practical inferences arising from the subject.

(1.) Let us be careful in the education of children, that we impress upon them a constant sense of the Divine presence.

It is not easy to decide at how early a period the idea of a Father in heaven looking down upon the child with affection, caring for him, and providing for him with all, and more than all, the tenderness of an earthly parent, may be communicated. Most of us have no recollection of a time when the idea of God was unknown to us. Perhaps the further we look back into the obscure thoughts of infancy, the more simple, and affectionate, and reverential, will be our remembrance of a guardian Deity, watching over our tender steps, protecting us from dangers, and listening to our prayers. The habit of infant supplication is inestimably precious. Even those miserable beings who depart from God and violate His laws, and live in estrangement from Him, are not unfrequently reclaimed and led to better things, by the revival of their infant memories. Contrasting those happier times of simplicity and holy sincerity with the selfishness, and pollution, and degradation of their youth and manhood, they are shocked and humbled; they would gladly, at any price, regain the comparative innocence they have lost; their prayer is, that they may be converted and become as little children, and that God would create in them a clean heart, and renew a right spirit within them.

On the other hand, if religion has not been taught in childhood, or has been made repulsive and offensive; if God has been represented, not in the attractive light of a gracious Father, desirous of his children's good, but rather as a stern, unbending, inexorable ruler—*extreme to mark what is done amiss,* there is difficulty afterwards—a difficulty but for God's especial grace insuperable—in undoing the mischief done, and recalling the opportunities thrown away. There is a formidable resistance, an absolute repugnancy to religious impressions. The name and ordinances of God are not connected with pleasing, cheerful, encouraging, or consolatory associations; but on the contrary, with dark, gloomy, and forbidding images. The sinner, in his alienation keeps aloof from God and Godly thoughts. He looks upon religion, not as his first and readiest; but as his last resource, when on any emergency, every other refuge fails.

(2). Another inference, with which I shall conclude, is the awful state of those who not merely *forget* God, but openly provoke, resist, and blaspheme Him. To forget God is, as we have seen, a sufficient ground of condemnation. How alarming then must be the state of those who venture upon actual and deliberate sin. Concerning such persons we read, that they *treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.* Our blessed Saviour and Judge, in His description of the Last Day, declaring the sentence of condemnation He will pronounce on that dread occasion, adverts only to negative offences, or omissions of duty.

His words are :—"*I was an hungared and ye gave Me no meat, I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison and ye visited Me not.*"

If our Lord denounced with such severity individuals who neglected these common duties of humanity; with what indignation must he regard positive and avowed offenders; seducers, calumniators, blasphemers, liars, slanderers; the quarrelsome, the rapacious, the revengeful. To such wretched persons, how fearful hereafter, throughout eternity, the burning reflection, that not merely had they lost opportunities of good, but had done absolute irreparable evil; that they had been actually mischievous in the day of their probation; and that it had been good for the world and for themselves, if they had never been born!

Let it be our determination, my brethren, to have God in our remembrance, and not only to remember Him, but by His grace and help, to regard Him practically with filial love and reverential fear; to study His works, to read and meditate upon His word, to frequent His ordinances, to observe His sacraments, to bless and praise Him in prosperity, to submit to Him with patience in affliction; to look upon communion with Him as a privilege; and to anticipate, as the highest object of hope, the blessedness of dwelling with Him for ever; of seeing Him *as He is*, and of knowing *even as also we are known.*

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 46.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

THE NEED OF CORPORATE REUNION.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. J. OLDKNOW, D.D.,

Vicar of Holy Trinity, Bordesley, Birmingham,

PREACHED AT ALL SAINTS', LAMBETH, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1872.

"*We walk by faith, not by sight.*"—2 Corinthians v, 7.

The connexion in which these words are found evidently shows that they simply state the fact, that the communion held by believers with their Lord, in their present state, is by faith, and not, as it will be hereafter, by personal intercourse. "We walk by faith, not by sight." I purpose, however, to consider them in a somewhat different sense,—as expressing, the principle which must guide the Christian in his course through this world, if he would attain to the happiness of the next. Considered in this light, they furnish us with a rule, of which we cannot fail to see the reasonableness. Indeed, if a man were determined to walk by sight, to direct his conduct only by what he saw, he would run counter to the very first truths of Revelation Thus we have been taught from our infancy to acknowledge as one of these, "the resurrection of the body." But who that has gazed on a body from which the soul has departed, devoid of life and power and motion, that has seen it going to decay, and committed to the grave, and then, in the course of time, thrown up with the clods of earth, bone separated from bone, and crumbled to dust,—who, I say, would ever imagine that to this body animation should be one day restored, and it should come forth from the ground, identical with its former self? We believe, too, that a day shall come "in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." But what is there that we see to lead to such a belief? "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." If, therefore, we would not deny the plainest doctrines, I say not of Christianity, but of Revelation, we must trust not to what we see, but be guided by Faith.

And certainly the same consideration enters into the subject of the Unity of Christendom, and especially of the Church of Christ. That body was once visibly one, every portion, however remote or insignificant, being in communion with the rest. A very real and comprehensible unity exists still, the doctrines, sacraments, discipline and ministry, which have come down from the beginning, still universally prevailing; and while through them each portion has communion with its Lord, it cannot fail to be, in some important degree, one with all the others who enjoy the same communion. But this unity appeals to faith and not to sight. Outwardly there are differences and disagreements which keep in separation the various parts of the Church, so that she no longer appears before the world "as a city at unity in itself." On the contrary, men see her "by schisms torn asunder, by heresies distressed," one portion at variance with another, or priding itself on its fancied superiority, and its consequent separation from all the rest. And so it is thought hopeless to pray or to labour for the restoration of her primitive unity: nay, until of late years, the very idea of it seemed to have passed from men's minds, or if it occurred to them, to be no longer thought desirable. But how is this, my brethren? Do we not read in Holy Scripture that "there is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all?" and can this declaration be perfectly apprehended without the visible unity of the Church, the body of Christ here spoken of? And, again, has not the Saviour prayed for them which should believe on Him through the word of His Apostles, "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me?" And can this prayer be fulfilled without a unity of which all may take cognizance? Surely, then, an object thus stated as a distinguishing characteristic of the Church, for the effecting of which the Saviour so earnestly prayed, may well be thought worthy of the warmest prayers that we can offer, and of all the exertion that we can put forth! Nor can we imagine that since He vouchsafed to pray for it, it shall not in due time be accomplished, or that it may not be as reasonably looked for as the resurrection of the dead, or the destruction of this world, and the existence of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. "We walk by faith, not by sight." How little probable did it appear when Abraham was a stranger in the land of Canaan, possessing in it no inheritance, no, not so much as to set his foot on, childless, and nearly a hundred years old, that all the land should be given to him and to his seed, who should be as the dust of the earth, so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then should his seed also be numbered! But he believed God, Who assured him of this, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, and in due time, what had been thus promised, was literally fulfilled.

And with such an example before us, my brethren, with the experience, moreover, of the realization of other promises, shall we doubt of that which assures us of the perfect unity of God's people, of one fold and of one Shepherd? "We have one father on earth," says an eminent foreign Catholic, "and that is Adam,—man; one Father in Heaven, and that is Jehovah—God; one Saviour both on earth and in Heaven, and that is Jesus—the God-man. Thus the Bible shows us our common origin and our common end. It teaches us what the wisdom of ancient times was unacquainted with, what modern science disputes still, and it leads men of all races and of all complexions, of all languages and of all beliefs, to that mysterious city, where the unity of the earth shall be consummated. Yes, a day will come, "when there shall be no more Roman Catholics, nor Greek Catholics, no more Lutheran Protestants, nor Reformed Protestants, but only true Catholics, and above all, true Christians. That day, I believe, will come in spite of difficulties, in spite of impossibilities, for there is one impossibility greater than all, namely, that God should be false to His word, that He should abandon His purpose, for when all is lost, all is truly saved." *

It is not indeed, to be denied that among the circumstances wherein we now find ourselves, there are those, which, taken by themselves, and superficially observed, might seem to present peculiar and almost hopeless obstacles to the reunion of the Christian world. The largest communion of Christians, which claims to include within itself the whole Catholic Church, has not only, as a body, persistently refused to meet any advances towards a satisfactory understanding made by those who should be regarded as sister Churches, to recede from pretensions which, of however comparatively long standing, were in the primitive

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* De la Reforme Catholique, par le Père Hyacinthe, p. 204.

ages utterly unknown, but has recently put forth as articles of faith necessary to salvation, opinions the most unfounded and pernicious, which had been previously met with warm opposition even within her own pale. Now this has without doubt widened the breach between her and other communions, who pride themselves in continuing to walk in the old paths, and so rendered it more difficult for them to be brought together: but it is the property of our Heavenly Father to bring good out of evil, to turn to the advantage of His Truth what appeared to be against it, and to the benefit of His Church what might seem to be for her deep and lasting injury. This He has often done before, and we may well trust Him to do it again. It is far from improbable that the discussions raised on these novel dogmas, may have deposited a leaven even in the minds of some who were induced to give in to them their outward adhesion, which will in time produce an influence on their whole community, and lead to such changes, directly or indirectly, as shall promote "the meeting, the blessed meeting of truth and peace"* among all who bear the Christian name. We know that a conviction of the inconsistency of these dogmas with "the faith once delivered to the saints," has led to the formation of a body, who while they refuse to separate from the communion in which they have been sanctioned, are yet stedfastly bent on urging its reform. They have authoritatively declared that "in order to bring about such a reform as shall prove effectual, it is necessary to go back to the period which preceded the separation of the East and West, and that only on the ground of the first eight centuries can the desired reunion of the different Christian communions be prepared for, and at length accomplished."† Now here, my brethren, we have distinctly set forth the very principle on which our own Reformation was professedly carried on, and to which our Church has, in theory at least, ever since steadily adhered. On this point—a most important one—we are at one with them, and so are the main body of Eastern Christians. Here, then, is a principle of unity which seems not unlikely to serve as a rallying point for many who have been long unhappily separated, which has been brought into especial prominence by the sanction accorded to those novel dogmas, so calculated of itself to continue and perpetuate a state of dis-union. The opposition which they have generally aroused has tended to bring into friendly relations, various religious bodies both within and without the pale of the Catholic Church, and to produce feelings and convictions which cannot but exert a favourable influence on the future union of the Christian world. There is therefore no cause for despair, or even serious discouragement, with regard to that glorious expectation: "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and assuredly the circumstances in which we find ourselves, when considered in all their bearings, are sufficiently hopeful to prevent our faith being shaken. Moreover, God "hath said, and shall He not do it? He hath spoken, and shall He not make it good?"

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* Archbishop Laud.

† De la Reforme Catholique, p. 127.

And if for a moment we confine our regards to our own communion, we may surely see enough to strengthen our faith, to make us already thank God and take courage! Notwithstanding the misrepresentations she has had to encounter, arising from the malice of her open enemies, the heresy of her false and disobedient children, the ignorance of foolish men who fancied they were pourtraying her in her true colours, and her own tacit acquiescence in the interference and oppression of the State, has not her Catholic character begun to be acknowledged by those in distant lands, who had heretofore confounded her with the sects of Protestantism? And has not this led to acts of intercourse, and even communion, of which, a few years ago, it would have been thought idle to dream? And is she not daily receiving into her maternal bosom many who have been brought up apart from her habitation, and taught to look upon her guidance with suspicion, or with scorn? We cannot be blind to these things, my brethren; and surely the sight of them should increase our faith and confidence in that end to which they appear to lead.

But "faith without works is by itself dead." Unless it lead to patient endurance or active exertion, according as either be required, it is of no avail. We must walk by faith, regulate by it our life and conversation. In connexion with the present subject, it will cause us as a matter of course, eagerly to avail ourselves of every opportunity of correcting misconceptions, softening asperities, and explaining difficulties which are so apt to keep religionists of different bodies in prolonged estrangement and variance. Especially will it cause us to set forth with all charity, but at the same time with uncompromising firmness, the true character of our own Church, both to show to them that are without, in our own land, that she has blessings to bestow which as yet they know not of, and to prove to the members of foreign communions that both in doctrine and discipline she has inherited and faithfully kept whatever is necessary to ensure the covenanted salvation of her children. I need not say that under this motive we must "contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," not suffering ourselves to be despoiled of any of its safeguards, especially of those which we possess in common with all other branches of Christ's Church. Indeed, to do so would be to show ourselves careless of its integrity, would give a handle to our enemies, would sink us in the estimation of those whom we would fain conciliate, and so furnish an additional bar to our future union.

Obviously, my brethren, what I have here laid down is the work of faith, the course to which a belief in God's promises would direct us in order to effect the union of all Christians in one visible body. Still we know not whether it may prosper, or whether it may fail. God accomplishes His purposes in His own way, and that way often turns out far different from what we had anticipated. We must act according to the best of our judgment, and be content to leave the result with Him. But there is one means which we may employ with full assurance of success, because He has *promised* that it shall be successful. "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven." And as an illustration of the power of prayer even before these promises were given, we have the example of "Elias, a man subject to like passions as we are, who prayed earnestly that it might not rain, and it rained not on the earth for the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heavens gave rain and the earth brought forth her fruit." Only, then, let us be assured that what we desire is in accordance with God's will; and in spite of delay or discouragement, we may continue to pray, in full confidence that in the end we shall prevail. And of this, in the present instance, we can have no doubt, since it is the same for which He prayed so earnestly in the days of His flesh, from Whose mouth these promises proceeded. The peace and unity of His Church—we know how dear this is to Him. We may therefore rely unhesitatingly on His gracious intercession, for the sake of which all faithful prayers are heard and answered.

And with a view to promote this blessed object, let us also be diligent in cultivating personal holiness. This we must do to secure our own salvation, for without holiness no man shall see the Lord; but the want of it, besides being fatal to ourselves, affords the most grievous hindrance to the present well-being of the Church, and of the general state of Christians. And as the holiness of individuals makes up the holiness of the general body, so it is impossible to say how much the welfare of the general body may be affected by the holiness or unholiness of each individual member. Let each one then think with himself, May not my sins and carelessness have been instrumental in perpetuating the unhappy divisions with which Christendom is afflicted? May not my example "have put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in my brother's way;" have kept him apart, if he were in separation, or have driven him forth, if he were outwardly of the one body? May I not thus have done what in me lay to retard the blessing of visible unity, the consummation of the Saviour's prayer? Such an examination, if it lead to repentance and the cultivation of holiness, besides being instrumental in furthering our everlasting happiness, cannot but set forward the object for which we are interested. It must cause those who now stand aloof, to come with us from a conviction that God is with us, and that such an association will be for their own spiritual advantage; whilst they who have hitherto refused to recognize us as members of the same body with themselves, to share our rites, or to admit us to take part in theirs, will of necessity come to the conclusion that God cannot be wanting to them in doctrine, discipline or any other ecclesiastical essentials, to whom He is so gracious in life, and so will be led to acknowledge our claims, and rejoice to welcome us to their fellowship. "We walk by faith, not by sight;" and in the exercise of faith, this result, if we are not wanting to ourselves, I think we may fairly anticipate. Sad, indeed it is, that the day when we may look for such things should still appear so distant, that while we, as a Church, have until lately prided ourselves in our isolation, and thanked God that we were not as others, *they*, now that we are coming to a better mind, are ready to confess our own shortcomings, to acknowledge what is good amongst them, and to abstain from intruding into their province, should sternly repel our overtures, and continue to regard us as "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise"—that when we happen to tarry amongst them, we should find

"No hand to own our fellowship, no voice to bid God-speed,
No lips to say that we and they in Him are one indeed.
But their injustice cannot put Eternal Justice by,
And their mistake can never make our truth into a lie.
One Lord we serve, one faith we hold, one hope we keep with them:
Tho' weak and few, yet where and who is he that dare condemn?
For that more blessed Pentecost we pant, and yearn, and long,
The Council Œcumenical that shall right the Church's wrong.
All toil we bear, all risk we dare, 'til they and we are one,
He only has to speak the word and straight it shall be done."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. F. W. FARRAR, B.D., F.R.S.,

Master of Marlborough College, and Honorary Chaplain to the Queen,

PREACHED IN HEREFORD CATHEDRAL,

ON THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1872.

> "*Then the devil taketh Him up into the Holy City, and setteth Him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down: for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: and in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.*"—Matthew iv, 5-7.

This which is the second temptation in St. Matthew is, as you are aware, the third in St. Luke. It may be that the younger Evangelist, looking upon it as a temptation subtler and more perilous than any which could come from physical suffering or from earthly splendour, regarded it as the *last* because it was the *deadliest* assault. But the fact that St. Matthew alone gives us definite notes of sequence,—the fact that, as an actual Apostle, he is more likely to have heard the narrative from the lips of Christ Himself,—the fact that the recorded words, "Get thee behind Me, Satan," seem to be the natural conclusion of the entire temptation, render it all but certain that the order of the actual temptation was that which the first Evangelist adopts.

Nor is this all; for there is also in this order an inherent fitness, a divine probability. It represents, on the part of the Tempter, a Satanic subtlety of insight, which the acutest human intellect could hardly have invented. For our Saviour had foiled the first temptation by an expression of absolute trust in God. Not even the pangs of famine in the howling wilderness, would tempt Him one step aside from the perfect confidence that

His heavenly Father *could*, and, in His own time, *would* prepare for Him a table in the wilderness. Adapting himself therefore with serpent cunning to this discovered mood of the Saviour's mind,—breathing a suggestion which must seem but the natural sequel of that triumphant faith,—the tempter challenges this perfect trust, not to gratify an immediate need, but apparently to avert an immediate peril. There is no stain of egotism, no impatience of suffering, in the present temptation. Transformed therein into an angel of light, the tempter breathed his insidious suggestion as a sublime victory of Messianic power, a striking illustration of sovereign faith. Transporting the Saviour to the Holy City, where

> "The glorious temple reared
> His pile far off,—appearing like a mount
> Of alabaster, tipped with golden spires,"

The tempter set Him not on *a*—but as it should be more accurately rendered—on *the*—on the *topmost* pinnacle. Probably it was the summit of that Stoa Basilikè, or Royal Porch, which towered over the southern extremity of the magnificent mass. At this point the walls of Jerusalem surmount a rocky and elevated platform; and as the porch itself was of stupendous height, we are told by the Jewish historian, no one could gaze down from it into the sheer descent of the ravine below without his brain growing giddy at the yawning depth of the abyss.

"If Thou be the Son of God;"—again that whispered doubt as though to challenge Him through spiritual pride into an indignant exercise of His miraculous power—"If Thou be the Son of God, cast Thyself down." Is not this Thy Temple, this Thy Father's house? Here the Prophets prophecied about Thee; here Anna and Simeon took Thee in their arms; here, while yet a boy, Thou didst amaze by Thy wisdom, the teachers of Thy people. And here, save Thyself, or, if not save, at least assert Thyself by the splendour of miracle, in the majesty of faith. Give to yon crowding populace a sign from Heaven. Flash down, like a star from the zenith, amid the assembled worshippers. Art Thou afraid? Nay, for — (and here mark how well the devil can quote scripture for his purpose, and set the fatal example so greedily followed, of isolating, perverting, distorting Holy Writ)— for "He shall give His angels charge concerning Thee: And in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest at any time Thou dash Thy foot against a stone."

So deadly subtle, so speciously plausible, was this second temptation. There was nothing vulgar in it, nothing selfish, nothing sensuous. It seemed all spiritual; and oh! to how many a Pharisee, and Reformer, and Saint, have such and similar temptations proved a fatal snare! But calm, spontaneous, deep with warning, came the simple answer, "It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God!" The word in the original is yet stronger,—it is, *οὐκ ἐκπειρσάει?*, thou shalt not tempt to the full, thou shalt not challenge to the extreme—the Lord Thy God; thou shalt not wantonly experiment upon the depth of His pity, or the infinitude of His power. When in the path of duty, then, trust Him to the uttermost with a perfect confidence; but let no seductive whisper thrust thee into suicidal irreverence in thy demand for aid. Thus, to add the words omitted by the tempter, shalt thou be safe in all thy ways:

> "Also, it is written
> Tempt not the Lord thy God: He said and stood;
> But Satan—smitten by amazement—fell."

Now no one, I suppose, can ever have meditated even superficially on the Temptation in the Wilderness, without feeling its many-sided and searching applicability; and though, at the first glance, this second temptation may seem merely to involve a spiritual pride, which, if not uncommon, is yet far from universal, I think that if we look at it a little more closely in humble simplicity, we shall, on the contrary, find it full of warning to the youngest, no less than to the oldest, to the worst sinner, no less than to the loftiest saint.

The key to its meaning lies surely in the answer of our Lord. It is an allusion to the Book of Deuteronomy, "Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him at Massah." And how had the children of Israel tempted God at Massah? They were in the wilderness, and in lack of water: but hitherto God had guided, had fed, had loved them; for them He had smitten the parted sea; for them empearled with manna the barren waste; for them

> "By day along the astonished lands
> The clouded pillar glided slow,
> By night Arabia's crimsoned sands
> Returned the fiery column's glow."

And could they then, indeed, suppose that God would desert them there to die of thirst? What did they need but a little calm faith, a little patient trustfulness, a little obedient hope, and then assuredly for them should the wilderness have rippled with living waves? But what did they do? They broke into angry murmurs; they clamoured with self-willed indignation; they demanded as a right the smiting of the stony rock. This was emphatically to tempt the Lord. It was at once presumption and distrust,—distrust of God's ordinary Providence, presumption of His miraculous aid. It was neither faith, nor submission, nor hope; it was rebellion—it was sin.

1. Are we, then, never liable to tempt the Lord our God, as Israel tempted Him in the wilderness, as Christ refused to tempt Him on the Temple pinnacle? Yes, in many ways. Christ would not cast Himself down, because He respected, as the laws of His Father, the laws of nature; and to cast Himself down would have been to brave and to violate them. Now, we too, by our knowledge of those laws, by study of them, by obedience to them, are placed as it were upon a pinnacle of the Temple,—on a pinnacle of that vast Cathedral of the Omnipotent, whose azure dome is the vault of heaven, and the stars its cresset lamps. Consider the supremacy of man in nature. For us winds blow and waters roll; for us are the glorious voices of the mountain and the sea; for us the shell upon the sand has its rosy beauty, and the moon in heaven her silvery light. And look what man has done! How he has made the very elements minister to his happiness, and decrease his toil,—how he has, as it were, seized the very lightning by its wing of fire, and bidden it flash his messages through the heart of mighty mountains, and the bosom of raging seas. But how? *By exact obedience to the laws of nature, never by insolent violation of them.* "The water drowns ship and sailor like a grain of dust; but trim your bark, and the wave which drowned it will be cloven by it, and carry it like its own foam, a plume and a power." But is there no moral lesson for us here? Aye, and a deep one: for the Book of Nature is also the Book of God, and the Voice of Nature the Voice of God; and the history of man, and the life of man had been very different,—if instead of neglecting that book, being deaf to that voice, violating those laws, and so flinging himself down from that Temple pinnacle, whereon his feet are set—he had humbly and faithfully striven to understand and to obey. Half of the peace and prosperity of nations, half of the health and happiness of man, half even of the serenity

and security of moral life, depend on this. For pain, mutilation, disease, death—these are the stern, instant, inexorable penalties affixed by nature to every violation of every law. Drop a spark near a magazine, and a city may be shattered; let hot ashes fall in a prairie, and a province may be devastated. The germs of diseases, the most virulent which spread dismay and disaster through nations and continents, lurk in the neglected cottage, and the stagnant pool. And, as you all know, these laws have a direct bearing on the individual life of man. By obedience to their beneficent indication can we alone preserve a sound mind in a sound body. He who would live to a green old age in purity and honour,—he who would "account himself both a fit person to do the noblest and most glorious deeds, and far better worth than to deject and defile with such a pollution as sin is, himself so highly ransomed and ennobled to a filial relationship with God,"—he who would not lay waste the inner sanctities of his own immortal nature, or lie down in the dust with his bones full of the sin of his youth,—he must regard the laws of nature as a voice behind him, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," when he would turn aside to the right hand or to the left. And then, indeed, he may feel that God's angels shall guard him in all his ways. Never will he

> "With unbashful forehead woo
> The means of sickness and debility."

The sudden terror, the pestilence of darkness, the arrow of noonday shall have no dread for him. Or if he suffer, he will calmly and cheerfully accept such suffering as a part of God's providence for his mortal life, knowing that *any* suffering encountered for the sake of duty with unflinching courage, endured for the sake of duty with perfect trust, is only less noble than martyrdom itself. It is related of one of the bravest of our kings—a king who, in many a hard fight, when horses were shot under him and bullets tore his clothes, exulted with a serene and imperturable courage, that he had yet a deep contempt for foolhardiness and neglect. "What do *you* do here?" he once asked sternly and angrily, of a gentleman who had come to witness a battle. "Do you not see the danger you are in?" "Not in greater danger than your Majesty," was the reply. "Yes," answered the king, "but I am here in the path of duty, and therefore may trust my life in God's care; but you—" . . . before the sentence could be finished a cannon ball laid the rash intruder dead at the unharmed monarch's feet.

2. Again, *by our spiritual and moral privileges*, no less than by the laws of nature, we stand as it were upon the pinnacle of the Temple. Consider our lofty privileges. We are, every one of us, members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. In infancy the Cross was signed upon our foreheads; in youth we were taught at Christ's school; in manhood the deepest and richest ordinances of a free and unpersecuted religion were placed wholly within our reach. How many by such privileges as these have been tempted to their own destruction! "Admitted into the holier sanctuary they have but been guilty of the deeper sacrilege; standing in the brighter radiance they have but flung the deeper shadow." How many, even in the early Church, cast themselves down at the tempter's bidding, into the gulf of Antinomianism; how many in all ages have imagined that *they in particular* need not be guided by the strict letter of the moral law. How is all such pride rebuked, how is the eternal majesty and grandeur of the moral law asserted, by Christ's calm answer, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." As long indeed, as we stand firm where His Providence hath set our feet we are secure. "He shall defend thee under His wings, and thou shalt be safe under His feathers; His righteousness and truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Daniel when he prayed thrice a day looking towards Jerusalem, was but doing what he had ever done, and therefore for him the lions mouths were sealed. The three children were but resisting unsought temptation, when they were dragged before the golden image, and flung into the burning flame, and therefore for them the Spirit of God breathed like "a moist whistling wind" amid the fire. But, on the other hand, when the early Christians thrust themselves presumptuously and insolently into the peril of martyrdom, how often did "the flaming inspirations of idealist valour" sink shamefully under the rude shock of reality. And the fall of many of them was more terribly shameful, when they put themselves with reckless self-confidence in the way of moral temptations. As long as men watch and pray, and use the ordinary means of safety furnished by God's grace, so long they are safe, but when they despise those ordinances, how utter may be their ruin. When Lot in his greed for gold, was willing to

exchange his nomad tent for the foul city's wicked streets, how in the shipwreck of all he had and all he loved,—how in the earthquake-shattered city, and the lightning-riven plain,—how in the putrescent scum and glistening slime of that salt and bitter sea, which rolled its bituminous horror where his garden pastures had smiled before,—how, I say, did he learn that God means even the most innocent-hearted to keep far away from sin. When Dinah walked forth to see the daughters of the land, and returned to bitterness and bloodshed, with rent vail and dishevelled hair;—when Peter followed into the High Priest's palace, and was startled by sneering questions to deny with shameless curses the Lord he loved,—how in their moral feebleness, how in their sudden retribution, do they illustrate the great sin and folly of rushing into danger's way. Yes! *the devil tempts* us when he thrusts sin before us, but, when we approach it of our own selves, it is then *we who tempt the devil*; and "Lead us not into temptation," is a prayer which will not be heard from the lips of him who makes no effort to avoid it. He who walks humble, prayerful, watchful, on the path of quiet duty, may indeed meet danger, but if so, firmly holding the hand of God, unshaken, unseduced, unterrified, he shall tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shall he trample under feet. But he who dallies with temptation, he who tampers with evil, is never safe. People say that such and such a man had a sudden fall; but no fall is sudden. In every instance the crisis of the moment is decided only by the tenor of the life; nor since this world began, has any man been dragged ever into the domain of evil, who had not strayed carelessly, or gazed curiously, or lingered guiltily beside its verge.

3. Once more and lastly, and this is a point which nearly affects us all, independently of all spiritual privileges, independently of God's inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, we are set as it were upon a pinnacle of the Temple, by the mere grandeur and loftiness of our being, by the freedom of our wills, by the immortality of our souls, by the glory and honour, a little lower than the angels, wherewith God has crowned our race. "What a piece of work is man," says the poet, "how noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!"

And how often, alas! And fearfully do men fling themselves down from this glory and grandeur, into the abyss.

"In sin's sick spurne; ah me, the deeper dole!"

For, indeed, by every sin,—above all by every *wilful*, by every *deliberate*, by every *habitual* sin,—we *do* fling ourselves from our high station down into shame and degradation, into guilt and fear, into fiery retribution, and it may be final loss. And yet, how many talk in these days as though to sin were no great harm, as though the sins of youth, for instance, were all venial, and it were rather a better thing than otherwise for a young man to sow, as they call it, his wild oats. But yet, though man deceive himself and be deceived—though, even ere it was promulgated, it was shattered to pieces on the mountain granite—the Moral Law remains in its eternal majesty, and in the heart and conscience of every living man louder than amid the thunder-echoing crags of Sinai, "*God spake these words and said.*" So that *every* violation of God's law is to fling ourselves down from the temple pinnacle into the foul and dark ravine;—it is to see whether man's insolent rebellion shall not triumph over God's immutable designs.

And to what do men trust, to what alas! do *we* trust when we act thus? is it not to the lying whisper that God will give His angels charge over us, and that whatever we do, we shall still be saved. But oh, we cannot learn too early that stern lesson of St. Augustine's that though God hath indeed promised forgiveness to those who repent, He hath not promised repentance to those who sin. We cannot convince ourselves too absolutely, that, if we sin, God will work no miracle for our deliverance. People talk of time producing a change in them, but time is no agent, and can lend no aid. And thus, more men destroy themselves by hope than even by despair; by the hope that is—the vague, vain, idle hope,—that they will some day be saved, than by the despairing conviction that they never can be saved. It has been often said that hell is paved with good intentions; it would be far more true to say that hell is paved with idle hopes. Century after century has the tempter been whispering to myriads and myriads of human souls, "Cast thyself boldly down. Yea, hath God said? Fear not. Thou shalt not surely die. Thou shalt enjoy the sweetness of the sin, and shalt escape—for God is merciful—the bitterness of the punishment." And yes, my brethren, God is merciful, but shall we make His mercy an excuse for our own wickedness, or pervert His love into an engine for our own destruction? Did our first parents, did any of all their millions of descendants in all ages, ever find that whisper true? In the lost Paradise, in the crushing shame, in the horror at God's presence, in the waving barrier of fire about the Tree of Life, in the son who was murdered, in the son who was a murderer, in the ruin, and anguish, and degradation that burst in like a flood upon their race,—did they find that God thinks nothing of His word, and does not mean what He has said? And if indeed He does not, what mean in history the battles and the massacres, and in nature the earthquake and the pestilence, and in daily experience the cell of the lunatic and the grave of the suicide? Do these look like "a reckless infinitude of mercy, and boundless obliteration of the work of sin?" Might we not, it has been said, seeing a river, hope that it is not a river, and so walk into it and be drowned, as seeing in all Scripture, and in all nature judgment and not mercy written down as the penalty of impenitent transgression, hope that it is mercy and not judgment, and so rush against the bosses of the Eternal buckler as the wild horse rushes into the battle?

Thus then, my brethren, if Satan tempt us to cast ourselves down from that high pinnacle, whereon we are now standing,—whether it be by neglecting the law of nature, or by presuming on the law of grace, or by defying the law of retribution,—we shall, if we yield to that temptation, be yielding to our own destruction. But to each of such temptations we have the true answer, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Trust Him, but tempt Him not. Trust Him, for thou art His child, and if thou wilt love and fear Him, the very hairs of thy head are all numbered. In the accidents of life, in its dangers, in its difficulties, in its moral crises, yea, in the very valley of the shadow of death, trust Him; but in obedience, not in rebellion; in faith, not in audacity; in humble patience, not in insolent self-will. So, but so only, shall He give His angels charge concerning thee, and in their hands they shall bear thee up lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

Church Sermons

By
Eminent
Clergymen.

[No. 47.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. C. G. C. DUNBAR, M.A.,

(Chaplain to Bishop Claughton,)

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. MARYLEBONE,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, JULY 28, 1872.

"*Behold I stand at the door and knock.*"—Revelation iii, 20.

Doubtless, my brethren, most of you are familiar with a picture, painted by the far-famed artist Holman Hunt, founded upon this text of Scripture, and called the "The Light of the World." It is a picture of Jesus, standing in the night-time, knocking at the door. The dews are falling softly on the hemlock and the tangled weeds that twine about the threshold. At the doorway stands the form of One who waits, and listens. In His hand He holds a lamp that lightens up the darkness. Through the waving branches overhead, the moonbeams flicker on His long white robe, and shine upon His thorn-crowned head, "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and knock."

Now, my friends, our Blessed Lord taught the multitudes by parables, "and without a parable spake He nothing to the people." I cannot do wrong in following His example; so I will speak to you in parables, telling you stories, shewing at whose unopened doors our Saviour stands and knocks. There is no man, so royal-rich, of such nobility, of wealth and fame so great, but Jesus waits to add to him another blessing still—greater than any that he yet possesses—even, Himself! Himself as a Companion and a Friend, whom neither poverty, neglect, nor even sin can drive away. *A* Friend! *Your* Friend, my brethren, the Friend of every individual soul now gathered here to-day! Yes! Jesus, *your* Friend, Redeemer, Loving Shepherd, God and King, who has left His ninety-and-nine most chosen, favoured, loving, faithful sheep, to wander and stray over the desolate, weary, arid, howling, wilderness, that He may come and search for *you;* that He may press *you* to His bosom; that He may place *you* upon His shoulders, and return rejoicing! "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and knock."

There is no man so *rich,* the poor may say, but Jesus waits to add to him another blessing still, but are there none so poor, so mean, so lost, so ignorant, so sunk in sin; that Jesus will not, can not, come to them? So poor! Oh no, my brethren of 'the poor,' Jesus Himself was one of the 'poor' ones of this earth; and never, never, was it written in 'His Book,' not many '*poor*' shall inherit the kingdom of heaven. So lost? No! None who live are lost! There is not one; so sinful, wicked, lost, degraded, sunk in heinousness of sin; but Jesus, still with loving care, is standing knocking at his door. God's love is boundless, endless, all-embracing; eternal as Himself, infinite as His mercy, limitless as His power. He cannot but love every creature that He ever made, He loves the very vilest of mankind. He loves the sinner, though He hates the sin. It is not for *His* sake, but for *our's,* that He calls upon us to give up our sins, that He keeps those good things from us, which, if we possessed them, would lead us on to sin; that He takes those pleasures from us, which else would bring us to our ruin. He rudely takes away our dangerous plaything, or our best-loved toy, just as the father snatches the razor from the infant's hand; and, like that infant, figuratively, we stamp, and scream, and cry; or else complain in words of bitterness, because our toy is gone.

My brethren, "shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not also receive evil?" Learn like holy Job, to say, "though He slay me, *yet* will I trust in Him; for God is not an ignorant God who does not know what is best for us, nor is He a malicious God who rejoices in bringing evil upon us. No! "He doth not willingly afflict the sons of men;" but "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." To rebel against that which God brings upon you, is to say that you know better than God what is really best for you. You may not understand the way of the Lord now, but that, "which you know not now, you shall know hereafter." Has your best loved treasure been rudely snatched away, and do you mourn over it, not considering that the righteous are taken from the evil to come? Is it some child that you have lost, and that now rests in Paradise? Ah! my friend, rebel no more against God's will. Had that child lived, you might now have wished it dead. Do not repine therefore, but be thankful. Many sorrows and troubles will come to you in this life, but no more than are requisite to fit you for your place in the Temple of the Heavenly Jerusalem above. Many a rough corner may have to be knocked away before you will fit into your place, but be assured the Heavenly Architect will not allow one blow of the hammer to descend upon you, *more* than is necessary to fit you in your place.

My brethren, there is not one of you so long a servant and a slave to sin, so completely sunken and degraded, that Jesus Christ has ceased to care for you. You may have reviled Him, cursed Him, barred and double-locked your door, and taken it for granted that He left you long ago, but still He is waiting there. Listen! He still is waiting at your door, He still is speaking to you, and He says, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock."

Ah! but some may say, "*My* door has been shut too long. I have now almost forgotten how to open it. I have lived too long in sin, to leave it now; I have sunken too deep in sin, ever to rise again: doubtless He knocks at *other's* doors, but Jesus could not knock at mine!" Say not so, my friends. There is not one door at which He does not knock. There is not one door at which He will not enter, if it is opened unto Him. It is only man, who measures out his mercy and forgiveness. God, makes *His* sun to rise upon the evil and the good; *His* rain to fall on saint and sinner, equally. To the best among you, and the worst, Christ speaks alike. To each of you, "Behold," saith He, "I stand at the door and knock."

Well, now! I will tell you stories, as I promised you. I will tell you parables, shewing at whose unopened doors Christ stands and knocks. Where shall the scene of my first parable be laid? Let it be in Grosvenor-square, and the time ———, an evening in the month of June. Now, your attention please, and I will begin. A woman, young, and fair, and beautiful; with clouds of yellow hair, and long white flowing gauzy drapery; sits on a low chair, looking out through an open window and gazing far into vacancy. Her jewelled arms and neck reflect the sparkle of her young bright eyes, but her face is rather sad and pale, for one who ought to be so bright, so sunny, and so gay. The fact is, she begins to wonder whether there may not be something greater, something grander in this life, something more worth the having, than the ceaseless round of pleasure in which now she lives. She begins to tire of this continual whirl of gaiety. Her pleasures have become a toil; and she thinks it possible, that after all, there may be something nobler in this life, than the vulgar emulation of Society, the market for which she has been educated, and brought up. Perhaps she has had more than usual cause to think the world both hollow and deceitful. Perhaps the one exception which she fancied she had found, has proved as faithless and as fickle as the rest; and so, finding that all things disappoint her in the world, and that from it she can neither gather peace for mind, nor rest for heart; she thinks she will seek out some new interest in life. Having gained but little satisfaction from the World, the Flesh, or the Devil; from Pleasure, from Fashion, or from Sin; she thinks she will turn her thoughts to matters of Religion. Suddenly! she hears a knocking! Yes! There is some one knocking at the door! He speaks to her! It is a voice that she heard years ago. It is the voice of Jesus. He speaks to her and says, "Behold! I stand at the door and knock." Then she will get up and let Him in! She rises from her chair to do so, but her relations entreat her to keep quiet, to be calm, to sit still, and not to inconvenience them: and so she seats herself again, and, turning to the window, says, "Oh! good Lord Jesus, art Thou knocking at my door! Have patience with me Lord, good Lord. It is true my interests in life have passed away, my hopes are shattered to the ground, my prospects gone, and all my heart's affection wasted; but I would rather wait for one year more before I take Thee in, Good Lord. If by this time next year, when another London Season shall have come and gone, the world has still no new interest or pleasure it can offer me; if I then find that there is nothing left for me in life, no pleasure, interest, joy, or happiness that I can gain, excepting that which Thou mayest have to offer; then, Good Lord, I will arise and open my door to Thee; so have patience with me still, Good Loving Jesus, wait at my door,—or go away, and come again this time next year." "Behold!" saith He, "I stand at the door and knock!" Oh! patient Jesus! Loving Jesus! Never weary! Ever knocking at the sinner's door!

What! My brethren, must He wait there still! Not only till our necessary work is done. Not only till our hopes in life are fled; but must He wait there still, until we find there is no other interest or pleasure for us in this life excepting that which He may have to offer? Yes! He must wait there still for this. He will wait there still for this. He does wait there still for this; and unwearedly waiting for this, He says, "Behold! I stand at the door, and knock!" Rise up! Rise up! I command you in Christ's name. Open the door and take Him in. I adjure you, 'foolish Virgins,' by the 'holy women' who ministered to Him of old. I adjure you, mothers, by the "Virgin Mother's" love. I adjure you, fathers, by Joseph's watchful care. Young men, I adjure you by the sweet St. John! Keep Him no longer standing in the damp and cold without, but take Him in. This very night, He comes to sup with you. He says, "I stand at the door and knock!"

Well, my friends! We have looked into the houses of "the rich," let the scene of my next parable be amidst those hovels, and those pig-sties, which men call the dwellings of "the poor." Ah! It is easy for the rich man, seated by his warm fireside upon a softly cushioned chair, to talk and legislate upon the vices of the poor, but I don't believe that there is one rich person here this afternoon, who, were he in the "poor man's" place, would not go mad, or drink, like him, or die. Who says the poor ought to do *this*, and ought to be content with *that?* Would you do *this?* Would you be content with *that?* Wherein do you differ from your poorer brother, that you require such warmth, such comforts, and good food; while anything, or nothing at all, will do for him? It is all a falsehood and a lie, and in your hearts you, every one of you, know it is. It is a lie of selfishness which the devil made that he might catch the Wealth and Fashion of the world; but you shall hereafter hear the voice of Jesus, speaking to you and saying, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat; naked, and ye clothed Me not."

The poor man cannot think about religion. He is cold, and he is hungry, and he can think of nothing else. Oh! It is a shameful, shameless, cruel, wicked, heartless thing, the way in which we treat our brethren of the 'poor.' The English labourer is less cared for, then the Indian coolie, or the old West Indian slave. "Go to now, ye rich men," who come to town for your "London Season." Your gold and silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you! Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth! Ye have oppressed the poor, and he doth not resist you! Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; but your judgment, now a long time, lingereth not; and your damnation slumbereth not. Defraud not the "poor" of his living, and make not the needy eyes to wait long. Turn not away thine eye from the needy, and give him none occasion to curse thee; for if he curse thee in the *bitterness* of his soul, his prayer *shall* be heard of Him that made him! Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received *your* consolation. The "poor" man lives the life of a dog; and he dies the death of a beast. As the carcass of the ox is taken from the slaughter-house to be disjointed at the shambles, so his dead body is carted from the workhouse to be dismembered at the hospital; or, else, like Jehoiakim, he is buried with the burial of an ass. The poor man's life is one long, weary, dreary, hopeless blank, with scarcely one bright spot throughout its weary length. Nothing to look forward to; nothing but that death he feels so ill prepared to meet, or that which he dreads more than death—the workhouse. Surely in *that* world to come, God will consider the poor man's pains! Surely there can be no further hell for those who never yet have known a single joy!

Come, then, my friends with me, and in your minds and imaginations, picture to yourselves the poor man's home: but do not let the time be at this season of the year; for, though the sun raises unwholesome exhalations round the poor man's dwelling place, to some extent it mitigates his suffering. Let the scene of this parable be laid in the winter time—a winter's night.

The clear moon shines upon a window crusted thick with frosty leaves. The cold wind whistles through the keyhole, through the rag-stopped window frame, and underneath the door. A man and woman sit in darkness by a cold and fireless hearth. The firewood ash lies cold within the grate; the farthing-rushlight flickers up in one last flame, then, smoking, dies away. What have men to do with fire or candle when they cannot buy themselves a morsel's food! The hungry children, huddled in a corner of the room, moan and cry for food, as they lie shivering, half asleep. If you could see that woman's hungry, wild, worn, weary, white and haggard looking face; or the bitter sneer upon that poor man's sunken cheek—so wasted that it could not smile—then you might guess the thoughts that echo in each other minds, and make their blood run colder through their veins. (I am not telling you fictitious tales, for these are scenes that I myself have looked upon, and stories that I know are true.) They are thinking whether it would not be more merciful and kind, to kill those children that they love, and save them from a life of want; and then like many other weary hearts to drown their sorrows, by one leap into that cold dark river that slowly winds its way through this vast over-populated city. "Surely," cries the man, "there *can* be no God in heaven!" He laughs in bitterness at the bare idea of such a thing. "How" he asks, "can there be an all-powerful God; a good, a just, a loving God in heaven, who will yet permit such cruelty, such vice and wickedness, such injustice, sin, and wrong, such misery and want, on earth?" He will curse God, and he will die! "Ah!" cries the woman, pale from cold, "long could I wait and suffer, toil and want, if I had any cause for hope, but everything is blank and hopeless. I am so ill and wasted now, I could not earn a fair day's work. Here in this cold dark room the sunlight never reaches me; there is no one, now, who cares for me. The children cry for bread, and I have none to give; my infant child lies cold upon my breast, dying, because I cannot nourish it. Even if I might hope to reach that heaven, I sometimes hear men speak about, it were not much, for death —is long to wait; and heaven—is far to go."

Suddenly they hear a knocking at the door. "Why speak like this" says Jesus to that man, "can all the horrors of your life, equal the horror of your sin to Me? You have drunken of My cup of sorrow. You too are an outcast; despised and rejected of men, but you shall be no more alone. Open your door and take Me in. "Behold! I stand at the door, and knock!" and you, poor woman; you poor, heart-broken, sorrow-laden, fainting, sinking soul. Why talk of all the sorrows you go through? What were ten times all your grief compared to that I bore for you! Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by; behold and see if there be any sorrow like unto My sorrow. For Me, men wove a thorny crown, and nails were driven through My hands and feet. There was an earthquake, and I died, I poured out My soul to death with one exceeding bitter cry, that shook the houses, burst the rocks, and tingled in the dead men's ears below! I died for you; I rose again for you; and now I live for you. Here, truly, all is darkness, but there is joy where the Sons of God are singing. Here you are sorrow-laden, but there the Sons of God shout for joy; the Morning Stars sing together; the Nations walk in brightness, and have forgotten how to weep! All tears are wiped from every eye! Why talk, despairing of the earthly love that wanes to you, and of the earthly sun that sets to you, and of the heaven that lies so far from you. It is not long to wait; I stand at the door, and knock! I am here! It is not far to go. You need not go; your heaven comes down to you. 'Behold! I stand at the door, and knock!'"

Can there be any here like these poor souls whom I have spoken of? Any one who thinks that "God has forgotten to be gracious," that "He will be no more entreated," that "He has shut up His loving kindness in displeasure," and that "His mercy is clean gone for ever more." Then know poor soul, that Jesus Christ has not forgotten to be gracious, but knows all your pains and fears: upon your soul much thought is spent in heaven, and angel's tears are mingled with your grief.

Can there be any here who feel themselves alone in this cold, hard, and calculating world; their relatives and friends all dead, or gone to distant lands. You need remain alone no more. Your Jesus waits for you to take Him in. Oh! open your doors and take Him; in and He will sigh, pitying the sorrow which that sigh shall heal: and He will enter in and dwell with you. He says, "I stand at the door, and knock!"

Well! My brethren! Shall sorrow have Christ's pity, but not sin, that burden heavier to be borne? Listen to one story more. We will begin in the good old way. Once upon a time there was a woman who had sinned. She wept, but no one heard her; she repented, but no one believed in her; she sorrowed, but no one went to comfort her; and all the 'good,' and 'moral' women of her old acquaintance, gathered their skirts together, and raised their heads, and passed her rudely in the streets. Well! What if she did weep, and none of you went near her; and what if she did repent, and none of you believed in her repentence; and what if she did sorrow, and none of you went near to comfort her. Observe, though it was hard; I do not say you were to blame, or that she had ought against you, though *your* feet never drew near her door; yet *One* did come even to her, He spoke in accents soft and sweet: and said, "Behold! *I* stand at the door, and knock."

Ah! My brethren! Who are we, poor miserable sinners, that we should judge our neighbours. What do you know, or what do I know of the secrets of our neighbour's heart. What do you know of the strength of the temptation, or how exactly suited it may have been to the peculiar weakness of the sinner's temperament. 'Most virtuous' friend, next time you see a sinner, thank God, not that you are not like him or her, but that the temptation brought against that sinner was not sent to you, and that God did not select you to be an example to your neighbours. Learn to think of the advantages given to you which have not been given to others (or *they* would be sitting in sackcloth and ashes) and echo St. Paul's words—knowing that to whom much is given, from the same shall much be required—"Sinners, of whom I am chief." Who art thou that judgeth another man's servant? To his own Master he standeth or falleth? Judge not, and ye shall not be judged? Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven!

Ah! My friends, the greatest sinners are not always those whose sins the world visits the most heavily! I expect in that day, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed, that many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first; and the harlots and publicans shall enter into heaven, before many who now parade themselves in all the pomp of religious pride.

Ah! My friends! How can we with our imperfect knowledge, and warped judgments, condemn or judge our fellow-servants! How can we presume to limit the infinite mercy, and set boundaries to the boundless and everlasting love of the

Father-God, that loveth every creature He hath made. Doubtless, to know all, would be to love all; and to understand all, would be to forgive all.

Can there be any here to-day who have wandered from the paths of virtue. Then know, poor souls, that sweet to the angel's eyes is the look of the sinner wearily retracing his or her steps back again. Then the Morning Stars sing together, and the Sons of God, as at the Creation, shout again for joy. Then all the courts and corridors of heaven echo notes of harmony, and songs of sweetest praise; for 'there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance !'

Oh ! My friends ! My friends ! Keep your Jesus no longer standing, waiting at your doors. What ! Have you lived all these years, a useless, selfish, lonely life, when you might have had your Jesus living with you ? Are you still living without God in the world ! Oh ! open your doors this very night, and take your loving Saviour in. You will hear the voice of Jesus if you will only listen for it. Hear it as you walk through the streets of the city, as you rise in the morning, as you lie down upon your beds. Hear it in the singing of the birds, in the rustling of the trees, in the sighing of the wind. Hear it in every wave of sound, and echoes on the summer breeze: hear Him saying, "Behold ! I stand at the door, and knock !"

Then wound not again that sacred heart, pierce not again those tender hands, hurt not again those weary feet, bruise not again that thorn-crowned head; but open your door and take Him in. He saith, "I stand at the door, and knock !" Oh ! Lord, our God ! Oh ! Jesus ! Jesus ! Loving Christ ! The Sinner's Friend ! Oh ! Ever-loving Jesus, never weary, ever knocking at the sinner's door. Come ! Most Gracious loving Christ: for we will open our doors to Thee. Come ! Come this very night, Good Lord ! Come, stand at the door and knock. He is here ! My brethren ! He is come ! Listen ! He knocks ! He speaks to you ! He says, "Behold ! I stand at the door, and knock !"

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. J. WILLMORE HOOPER, M.A.,

Rector of Gateshead Fell,

PREACHED IN GATESHEAD FELL CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1872.

"*And as they did eat, He said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?*"—Matthew xxvi, 21, 22.

There is something very touching about these sorrowful interrogations of the disciples when they were informed that one of them was about to betray the Master. They did not burst out into exclamations of horror at the impending sin. They did not, each one for himself, disclaim it and declare the impossibility of their ever committing so foul a deed. They made no protestations of innocence. Overwhelmed with the announcement of the fearful iniquity which was about to be perpetrated—scarcely believing the thing possible, and yet unable to doubt the assertion of Him who was able to read their very hearts—they "began, every one of them, to ask Him, Lord, is it I?" I say there is something very touching about the question. They knew their own consciences. They felt that if there was one thing which they could *not* do, it was to betray their Master. They were conscious that if there was one thing they specially *desired* to do, it was to die for Him. And yet—awful declaration from His own lips—they were told that one of them would actually be the means of His being led to death. And so they were staggered as it were in their own knowledge of their own hearts. They were conscious that the Saviour knew them better than they knew their own selves; and their first thought was, not of resentment for a wrong done them, not even of truthful and just self-assertion, but of sorrowful doubt respecting their own motives and intentions. Each one echoed the thoughts of his neighbour. "Can this be true?" "Can it be I who will commit this sin?" "Can such a fearful wickedness lurk in *my* heart?"

Now, this was undoubtedly the wisest question which the disciples could possibly have asked their Lord under the circumstances. It showed, too,—paradoxical as it may sound,—how true and thorough their hearts were, and, to use a modern phrase which is often grossly misapplied, what a high stage of Christian experience they had, even at this time, reached. Mark, too, by contrast, the conduct of him who was the real culprit. He made no exclamations of sorrow or surprise, but sat sullenly silent till he felt that his intended guilt could be no longer concealed. Then, in the self-same form, parodying as it were, the inquiry of the eleven, he also asked, with reckless bravado, "Master, is it I?" Here is manifested a depth of relentless wickedness which it is difficult, or rather impossible, to fathom. The sin of Judas must ever remain a mystery. It is hard to imagine how any man, who had been a follower of the Saviour, and had been in intimate communion with Him, could, for the sake of mere money, betray Him to His enemies. This seems in itself so incredible that some have endeavoured to lessen the sin of Judas by attributing other motives to him; but I fear there is no escape from the fact plainly indicated in the words of the Gospel, that Judas was, in intention, the most ignoble of murderers—the murderer of the Lord of Life for the sake of a few pieces of money. Into the conduct of Judas I do not, however, purpose to inquire in detail at present. It must suffice to point out that he stands on record as an example of the very lowest depth of ignominy and baseness into which it was possible for our human nature to fall.

It is rather from the conduct of the honest-hearted and true disciples that I wish to draw our lesson of instruction this morning. One of the saddest facts in connexion with the fallen nature which we bear in this life, is indicated in the *possibilities of evil* which exist in every one of us. He only is truly wise—he only has a real knowledge of his own heart—who continually mistrusts himself, doubts his own motives, fears for his power of resisting temptation. Hence the wisdom of the question of the disciples. They thought they knew themselves. They felt sure that no such grievous sin lurked in their hearts. Yet they doubted; and they asked Him who alone could truly tell them whether they were right in their interpretation of themselves. And this, I say, is one of the highest forms of Christian experience—profound mistrust of self.

I fear there is no escape from the conclusion, that in the nature of every one of us there exist the germs of deadliest sin. Suppose we take a small plot of ground, and sow there a variety of seeds, it will obviously depend very much upon circumstances, whether those seeds spring up and come to that maturity which they may reach under favourable conditions. If the soil has been well dug, and if it gets plenty of sunshine and rain, most certainly they will germinate and grow, and yield their various produce. But if the soil be stony and caked together in masses, you will get little or no result from your seed-sowing. If you put down slabs of stone on a portion of the ground, the seeds can only rot on the part thus covered. Thus it is with the seeds of sin, which lie latent in the heart. In some, surrounding circumstances foster their growth, and cause them to spring up rapidly and luxuriantly. In others, on the contrary, circumstances lie as a dead weight, just like the slab of stone on the soil. It is no great credit to the man abounding in wealth that he does not pick pockets or cheat, or rob on the highway. In him the circumstances of his life prevent the possibility of any gross sin of this kind. So on the other hand, a man who hardly knows where he will get his next meal, is not likely to fall into the rich man's sin of pride and self-sufficiency—The kind of sin to which we are liable from circumstances to fall into, differs in each one of us. But we are all liable to *some* besetting sin, fostered by some particular set of circumstances, and varying in form and degree with the varying conditions of life.

Now one great difference between the worldly man and the follower of Christ, consists in the different way in which they regard the sins to which they are prone. I will not speak now of those who surrender themselves entirely to the indulgence of some particular appetite or passion which is strong in them, and who go on in their evil course, reckless of all consequences, either in this world or the next; they are so clearly in a path, not merely of peril, but of actual ruin, that it needs no words to prove how terrible is their condition. But I will speak rather of those who lead a fair outward life, who are moral on the surface, and who, some of them, would be shocked to be told that they are not in the way of salvation. Well, what does the moral man aim at? if indeed he aims at anything at all. For, usually, he is content to go on day by day, and take things just as they come—content with life as it is, and the enjoyments of life, and regarding nothing higher or better than the business or pleasure of the passing moment. But if he has any standard to aim after, it is merely the standard set up by respectability. He only cares to act up to the ethics of the world around him, carefully refraining from anything which may shock the moral susceptibilities of the better portion of those with whom he comes in daily contact. Of spiritual striving and struggling he knows nothing. That wonderful picture which St. Paul draws (in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans) of the law of sin in the flesh, battling against the law of God, is to him a representation which has no meaning. When the Apostle exclaims, "O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death," the words sound strange and meaningless. He is conscious of no "body of death" in himself. It is all life and pleasantness. He goes on content with himself, and with all around him, and thinks that this world would not be such a bad place after all, if things were not so crooked sometimes.

It is only the true Christian—he who has been born again and renewed through the sprinkling of the Blood of Christ—who realizes his actual state, how corrupt and sinful his heart is, how it needs the utmost caution, and the most continual effort to keep him free from polluting sin. The worldling is like one who walks through a country seeking the most pleasant paths he can find, and finding plenty of them—wandering through meadows where the grass is soft and pleasant to the feet, along sweet lanes where the banks are gemmed with wild flowers,

> "By shallow rivers to whose falls
> Melodious birds sing madrigals."

The Christian, on the contrary, is as one traversing a land beset with peril. He dares not lose himself in the contemplation of the pleasant sights which lie around him. He may not stand and listen to the sweet sounds which fall on his ear. For he knows that danger lurks in every direction. He knows that there are snares which may entangle his feet. He knows that there are hidden pitfalls covered from the eyes. He knows that there are lurking enemies who may kill.

How is this ? Because the believer has been taught by God's Holy Spirit the deceitfulness of his own heart. He is painfully conscious that he cannot trust himself. He seeks to attain, not that mere surface morality which satisfies the world, but a perfect purity of heart and conscience in the sight of God. And the longer he lives and the larger his experience grows, the more he is led to doubt himself, his intentions, his motives, his desires. Knowledge of self is the knowledge that is attained last of all. To everyone it comes late. To some it never comes. But to the Christian alone is it given to understand his own heart in its inmost recesses, to master its workings, to find out all its deceitfulness and depravity.

One of our old veterans who went through that weary Peninsular War and finished up victoriously at Waterloo, was likely to be familiar with the features of the French, and to have become well versed in all their tactics. He had come off amongst the conquerors; but he was not one who would underrate the courage or the resources of the enemy which had been beaten. So with the Christian. In the long years of warfare, with the sin dwelling in his own heart, he begins to learn how every attack will come. He gets to know beforehand, almost what form the next onslaught will take. But he cannot despise the enemy. He has learnt, too well, his own weakness. He feels that sometimes the battle, if it had turned a hair's breadth further in the wrong direction, would have ended in defeat for him instead of victory. And so he chants no pæan of triumph, but only thanks God humbly, and, with tears of gratitude in his eyes, goes on hoping for fresh strength when the next attack is made by the enemy.

Yes, the disciples knew their own hearts when they asked sorrowfully, "Lord, is it I?" And the Christian learns in time to know his own heart too. He may start in his course fresh and vigorous, and, running with the first strong tide of love and faith, may think there is no more chance of *his* falling than of the earth being shaken in its course. But time shows him, before very long, the fallacy of this. And as the years go on, and he finds himself, by God's mercy, still walking, or, it may be, limping or creeping rather, in his Christian course, he thanks God that he is even where he is, and not far away in outer darkness. He sees one Judas dipping his hand in the dish, and another betraying the Master with a kiss; and he exclaims, "And I too, Lord? Is it not so also with me? Am I any better? Am not I ready to sell my birthright for wealth, or honour, or ease, or pride, or position, or pleasure? What am *I*, O God, that Thou shouldest preserve *me* while others fall away?" And thus with the growth of Christian experience, come the deepest humility and self-abasement. More and more is it continually felt that all, from beginning to end, is due to the grace of God, and nothing—literally nothing—to self.

And side by side with this feeling grows up a feeling of deepest pity for those who do not resist temptation, who lose instead of winning in the battle with sin, who betray Christ, or who never follow or love Him. Pity for the sinner, is, or should be, precisely commensurate with the gratitude felt for the escape from sin. That I have been placed in circumstances which have not fostered the growth of besetting sins, or that, by God's mercy, I have had grace given me to resist the temptation, however fiercely it may have come—is not this a reason why, while I feel deeply thankful to the Father for His mercy to me, I should also feel equally deep sorrow for those, who, in God's mysterious orderings, have not been thus blessed. The result of all true Christian experience, I take it, is to increase distrust of self, deeper gratitude to God, and to cause the mind to be overruled by the heart when sitting in judgment on the sins of others.

And if there be one here to-day who is groping his way through the darkness of surface morality, who is learning to be dissatisfied with his own goodness; to distrust himself; to desire to deal honestly with his conscience; to feel that there is a more blessed law than the law of the world's commandments; O let him not stifle this heavenly voice which is speaking in him. Let him be assured that disbelief in his own heart, and of all its promptings is one of the first steps towards the Life in Christ. If you begin to cease to satisfy yourself, you may hope to get into the way in which you will satisfy God. Ah! the worldly heart, complacent and self-contented, would never have asked, "Is it I?" It would have suspected such and such a neighbour; but it would never have doubted about itself. It is a hard and bitter lesson; but it has to be learnt if we would reach the Kingdom of Heaven. What we should do is, not to build up a reputation for ourselves out of the misdeeds of others, but to look at our own vileness in the sight of God, and the sins which we commit every day of our lives. This self-abasement can only come through the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, but that teaching is given to every one of us, if we will only accept the lesson. It is, I say, a difficult lesson; but it is a lesson, which, faithfully learnt and put into practice, will carry the soul in penitence to the foot of the Cross, and thence, through the deliverance which comes by the Blood of Christ, into all the blessings of Eternal Life.

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN.

[No. 48.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

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PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 4, 1872.

"*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.*"—1 Corinthians xii, 1.

Like the world at large, the Church of Christ has had in every age of its existence a certain number of what would now be called "questions of the day" under discussion. Some points as to the nature of its work amongst human souls, or as to its constitution, or as to its doctrines, or as to its formularies, or as to its relations to human society at large, or as to its relations to the public thought of the time, have been raised and brought prominently before the minds of men—have been discussed with more or less warmth until at length a settlement has been arrived at.

When St. Paul wrote this Epistle there were several questions of this kind in the Church at Corinth. There was one as to how to deal with a gross criminal case; another as to the dress and behaviour of Christian women; another respecting the administration of the ordinance of the Holy Communion; a fourth as to the advisability of marriage under certain circumstances; and this question respecting what were then termed the "Spiritual gifts." When St. Paul says "that he would not have the Corinthians ignorant concerning spiritual gifts," he certainly does not mean that he would not have them ignorant of the whole matter. There was, for them at least, very little danger or probability of that, because at least within the Church at Corinth, it is clear enough that this question of the spiritual gifts would be daily discussed, and with no little eagerness. But St. Paul's expression (which occurs also elsewhere) is an intentionally reserved one. It expresses something less than the writer's whole meaning, while yet it suggests that meaning most fully to his readers. St. Paul means that he is very anxious indeed that the Corinthians should have an accurate and complete knowledge about these gifts, about their origin, about their purpose, about their importance.

Now the particular gifts to which St. Paul was referring at Corinth, were not exactly, as a whole, like anything that is to be witnessed in the Church of Christ at the present day. They were not, indeed, mere miracles, because, strictly speaking, nothing can be more miraculous than any act whereby the Divine and Eternal Spirit infuses into the created soul some quality or grace which it did not before possess—such, for instance, as love or peace—but looked at from without, they were much more striking. They produced effects which challenged the attention of the eye and the ear, and were calculated to fire the imagination. St. Paul mentions nine of these gifts in his letters to the Corinthians. Of these the "word of knowledge," the "word of wisdom to prophecy," were such as might be found, to no inconsiderable extent, diffused through the Church of Christ at the present day. The "word of wisdom" would seem to mean an eminent power of apprehending revealed truth in its relation towards the general field of human thought and human knowledge, or,—as we should say,—of apprehending it philosophically. The "word of knowledge" implies an insight, more or less profound, into the several departments of revealed truth, and into their mutual relations towards each other; while "prophecy" means not simply the power of predicting the future (though it does mean that), but especially the power of stating truth and duty clearly and forcibly to others. And the "gift of faith" here mentioned would be, probably, something distinct from the faith of ordinary believers, a kind of extraordinary illumination of the believing soul, making God and the world unseen so vividly present to it, that all obstacles to duty seem for the time straightway to vanish; for as our Lord says, "such a faith removes mountains." This, too, is to be found in some gifted Christians in all ages of the Church.

The five other gifts are at least less ordinary. There were Christians at Corinth who had the gift of healing, and others, the more extraordinary gift of working miracles. These were plainly cases in which the fire of the Holy Ghost, possessing, enlightening, and warming the believing soul, made itself felt through the soul and body of the believer, and produced effects for which no known natural causes could account.

Others, had the gift of discerning spirits—something deeper, that is than a mere insight into character—although analagous to this, great and not uncommon gift; a power they had of seeing in other souls the exact endowment with which the Holy Spirit had furnished them,—what in them was really the work of grace,—what only the counterfeit of nature.

Others were given to speak with unknown tongues, probably, as at the Pentecost, in foreign languages, sometimes, with a view to missionary work among the strangers who were to be found about the port and in the streets of Corinth; probably also, and more frequently still, in a mystic language, to which no known human tongue would correspond, yet one in which the illuminated and entranced soul might alone at times be able to express itself. Others, again, had the gift of interpreting tongues—it may be foreign languages—more probably it was the mystic language of devotion, which but for the gifted interpreter would have died away upon the ear of the audience without leaving even an idea behind.

It was natural that the exercise of such endowments as these should have led to much discussion at Corinth, where the subject was practically and frequently brought before the eyes and ears of Christians. Questions were eagerly asked; they were often hastily and erroneously answered; they were at last referred to the Apostle. They were such as these, "Did all these gifts come from the same source, or were some of them from below and some from above? Were they all equally important, and if not, which were the most important? Was not the striking and extraordinary gift of tongues, at least, entitled to greater admiration than the comparatively commonplace gift of preaching and prophecying; and if so, was it not hard that some Christians should have gifts of the higher order, and others only those of the lower order; that some should be the eyes and hands of the Church, others its feet or less honourable members? Would not, it was asked—would not the possessors of the great gifts of speculative and administrative power in the Church, be eyed with a certain amount of unavoidable jealousy by the possessors of humbler if not less useful endowments? And, if so, were not those gifts after all, of very doubtful advantage to the Church? Was it not perhaps a mistake to think so much of them? Might they not, conceivably, some of them, have belonged even to heathen necromancers, who while they appeared to think and act miraculously, yet in private called Jesus Christ accursed? And if so, was it not prudent, at the least, to treat them as matters of inconsiderable importance?"

Now St. Paul answers these questions, and in doing so he lays down principles of vital and permanent importance.

First, he tells us that every good gift even the very least is important, because they all come from a single source, the Divine and Eternal Spirit living and working in the Church of Christ. There are diversities of gifts, but they are from the same Spirit. There are diversities of administration, but it is the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God, who worketh all in all.

Secondly, he rules that the gifts do differ in importance, and that each must be valued by its practical value to the soul, and to the Church of Christ. On this account he decides that the gift of tongues, which excited such extraordinary enthusiasm at Corinth, is really a less important gift than the comparatively quiet and tame gift of preaching and prophecy, simply because the latter is of greater service to others—of greater service to the Church.

Thirdly, he will not allow that the possession of any gift whatever ought to make the possessor an object of jealousy. Being a gift, it implies no sort of merit in the possessor at all, but only in the Giver. It is given, too, not for the advantage, not for the credit of the possessor, but simply for the good of the Church at large. No gift accordingly could be possessed by the heathen, outside the Church, who cursed the blessed name of Jesus; and no gift rendered its possessors independent of others in the holy body of the Church, nor could be wholly monopolized for the advantage of the possessor. The eye could not possibly say to the foot "I have no need of thee."

And, lastly, all these gifts were inferior to those which were shared by all Christians—even the very humblest in a state of grace—such as love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; especially the graces of faith, hope, and charity. Especially were they inferior to the last and greatest of these, the grace of charity; the love of God for His own blessed sake, because He is what He is; the love of man in and for God.

This, briefly, is the knowledge which St. Paul was so anxious that the Corinthians should have; first, the sanctity of these endowments as coming, every one of them, from the Holy Ghost; next, the difference in value between these several endowments proportionate to their varying serviceableness to the souls of men; thirdly, the fact that no endowment or gift, however great, added any importance to its possessor, or made him rightfully an object of jealousy, seeing that he only held his gift in trust for the good of others; and lastly, the subordination of all these gifts to the great grace of charity.

The importance of this knowledge, my brethren, to us at the present day, appears to me to be undeniable; for we live at a time when men seem disposed to ignore the very existence of the Spirit in the world—the presence and action of the holy Comforter upon the souls of men. This is, perhaps, partly the re-action from some mistaken and fanatical ideas about His work which were to be found here and there in a past generation; but it is much more largely due, I apprehend, to the immense place which the material universe occupies in the thoughts, and especially in the imagination, of the present generation. We have explored the realm of matter; we have subjugated it; we have made it at once our friend and our slave, in ways undreamt of by our forefathers. Our telescopes report to us even the geography of distant planets; our practical science utilizes the immense forces of steam and electricity, and brings them under contribution to our daily and most ordinary needs; and we, the men of to-day, occupy, as compared with our ancestors—it is not too much to say it—quite a new position as regards space and time.

We converse hourly with the inhabitants of other continents; we pass from point to point with a rapidity which makes us in fact masters of the world, in quite a new sense from that in which former generations of men were its masters. Hence too, the sources for the creation of capital have been reached and laid open to us as they never were before; and the loan of last week in Paris which astonished all Europe, is but an illustration of what may be the enormous resources of even a single country in the modern world. And all which enhances and sets forth the outward, visible, material side of human life has made within the last twenty years unprecedented progress; and yet the wealth of our generation vast as it is, is not the measure of its luxury. In short, this world of matter with all its vastness, with all its undeniable mystery, with all its attractiveness and resource presses around each human soul as it never did before, and makes the realization of an immaterial world, at least for large classes among us, increasingly difficult. It is, I say, not so much a difficulty for the reason as a difficulty for the imagination. As the eye rests upon the streets of this metropolis which year by year become wider and more spacious and magnificent; as it rests upon the gigantic and increasing proportions of the traffic which crowds and crushes around and along these thoroughfares through the weary hours of a long summer day; as it rests upon the immense emporiums and structures of every kind which rise almost month by month in every quarter of the metropolis, we insensibly accustom ourselves, I will not say to the conviction, but at least, to the impression, that this great kingdom of matter which we are so successfully cultivating is indeed, everything—and that there is nothing beyond it but a realm of fancy, for which the pressing demands of our practical every-day life leave us less and less of time and inclination.

Of course when we reflect, we know that the great problems of Life and of the Universe have not really been thus fundamentally changed. We know that man is, amid all his triumphs, only what his forefathers were before him; that he is merely a stranger hurrying across a scene which will soon have closed upon him for ever. What said the wise Teacher of the Old Testament—King Solomon—as we find it in the lesson for yesterday afternoon, describing, indeed, as he does, a different stage and phase of material civilization, but, as regards the whole question, anticipating and summing up the collective experience of the race. "I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits: I made me pools of water; I gat me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun." Yes, beneath all material splendour, even the greatest, there is at bottom an aching void, because man was made for something higher and nobler than matter—because he cannot find his real satisfaction in matter. He was made for God, and all that reminds him of his real destiny—yes, I will say it, of his true nobility—has a claim upon his ear, and upon his heart that cannot be permanently ignored. When the Apostle cries "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant," he touches a chord to which every man's heart must sooner or later respond, because in his deepest self, man is, and knows himself to be, a spirit. His real self is not affected by the money which he holds in his hand, or by the robe which he wears on his person, or by the servants who surround him that they may do his pleasure, or by the titles by which his fellow creatures approach him, or by the home in which he dwells, or by the position which he fills in the public eye. These things are far from being unimportant; they are, every one of them, gifts from God; and they enter into man's responsibility. Everything, indeed, hereafter may depend upon his way of dealing with any one of them; but they leave his real self unaggrandized, because his real self is a something independent of all of them. It is a deeper and more central thing than can be touched by these merely outward surroundings and therefore man, even in this very metropolis of the world's material civilization, cannot permanently forget that higher gifts than any which matter can furnish him with, are really within his grasp, and that he does not well to be ignorant of them.

But there are some who although they know that there is something higher than matter for their true aim and portion, do not always fix their eye upon the really spiritual. They mistake intellect for spirit. They imagine that by great mental accomplishments they are really raising themselves well out of the slough of matter, up into the true sphere of their highest life. They do not distinguish between the contents of a good library, or the proceedings of a literary or scientific association, and the results of the day of Pentecost. But man's reason and thought are but the instruments of his deeper self, of his indestructible personal being. His thought is not himself, any more than are his arms or his legs, and to make " spiritual," mean merely intellectual or mental gifts is to misuse language and to introduce confusion into thought. Certainly, I admit, the word "spiritual" is sometimes used in modern literary English for quick-witted or refined thought; but this debauched use of the word we owe to the French, and our own older usage distinguishes broadly and rightly between the life of the spirit which believes and hopes, and loves, and the life of the intellect which only reasons and thinks. The spiritual gifts are higher far than the merely intellectual gifts. The latter imply nothing as to the moral excellence of the inmost being itself. Voltaire's brilliancy was undeniable, but who would exchange the solid peace of the soul, for the power of making the epigrams which delighted Paris, but which could not bring one hour of true rest or happiness to their gifted author?

Do I say that material or intellectual gifts are worthless? God forbid! They, too, have come from Him. Every good gift whether in nature or by grace, is from above, and cometh down from the Father of Life. His gifts to the old heathen world—its astonishing cultivation of reason, of fancy, of language, its vast and varied efforts in the way of constructive enterprise, its burning passion, its abundant genius for art, its vigorous talent for administration and for government were and are still worthy of admiration as coming from Him. Even although these gifts were frequently or rather, almost as a matter of course, misused, debased and sullied by the pervading presence of sin, they were, in themselves, admirable, and we do well to honour and admire them if only because of their Author. And all that He has given in addition (and what has He not given?) to the modern world outside the kingdom of His Son, and independently of it—our material and intellectual progress in all its departments—is matter not for depreciation, still less for secret fear, but for thankful and generous acknowledgment, if only we remember that there are higher gifts beyond; and that when our architects, our merchants, our engineers, our historians, our poets and our metaphysicians have done their best, there still remains a sublimer sphere from which an Apostle whispers "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant."

Doubtless we here touch, as so often in the kingdom of Jesus Christ, upon mystery, that is to say, upon a truth of the reality of which we are convinced, but the full account and reason of which, is in our present state of being and knowledge, beyond us. Like the mystery of Life itself, like the mystery of growth, whether animal or vegetable, in the realm of nature, like the mystery of the Sacraments, our chief means of grace in the Kingdom of Christ, so the daily, hourly action of the Eternal Spirit upon the regenerate Christian soul is a thing certain to us, yet altogether beyond us. Who shall attempt to picture, much less to describe, the process whereby He, the Eternal and Uncreated Spirit overshadows, enwraps, penetrates, moulds, changes and turns our finite and created spirits, bathing them, if we will, through and through with His heavenly light and warmth, endowing them with powers which, according to the original forms of their natural structure, are altogether strange to them, fitting them by anticipation here, amid the scenes of sense and time, for a higher and a better world? Who indeed, shall say, for who knows enough of the nature and intrinsic capacities of spirit to attempt the description? We can but recognize the fact as a most real, although invisible miracle, daily, hourly taking place amongst us wherever the Divine Comforter breathes and works in the soul, rendered certain to faith by the unfailing promises of the Divine Christ; rendered certain to experience by the observed changes in those around us in disposition, in character, in spiritual insight, in the whole direction of thought and feeling; changes for which nothing natural will adequately account, and of which none can in reason deny the high significance. From age to age the gifts of the Spirit may vary in their form: substantially they are the same to the very end of time; and, next to the atoning death of Jesus Christ, and the power of His blood to cleanse our sins, there is no fact of equal importance to human beings who are living and have to die.

In conclusion, let us take the words of the Apostle in their broadest sense, and draw from them one or two practical considerations.

Now, these words furnish us with a guide to the true idea of Education—with a test and criterion for certain current educational theories. We live in an age when education occupies a greater place in the mind of the country than perhaps ever it did before. It has as we all know been quite recently the subject of imperial legislation, and there can be no doubt that for some time to come it will be amongst the foremost questions of the day. On many accounts we may well rejoice that this is so, and that attention has at length been generally awakened to a sense of the great duty which each passing generation—which our own generation, owes to that which shall succeed it.

But then what do we mean by "Education?" Do we mean merely instruction in what is called with a singular and perverse narrowness of meaning "useful knowledge;" so much knowledge, that is to say, as will be useful to a human being during his passage through this present life and only in relation to it—reading, writing and arithmetic, a little knowledge of history, geography, of the material laws of the universe, of the laws of life and death, knowledge of languages, and the course of human thought, or rather of human guesses at the secret and meaning of human destiny. Is there, then, *nothing* beyond? Is man really destined for a hereafter, and is there a body of knowledge within our reach which bears closely upon that hereafter? Is it not a matter of common sense to make this knowledge, too, a part of the instruction which we administer to our children for their highest good? Is a child, after all, only a mind, which, like a carpet bag, is to be crammed with as many facts huddled together as it can possibly hold? Is not a child rather a living soul, a character to be trained, to be developed, to be exercised, to be strengthened, to be chastened, to be encouraged; and is not some assistance from above, some special gifts, some sacraments, some graces, and some sources of life and of strength needful as a matter of fact for this great work? Ah! when I hear of "schemes of education," which are only schemes for packing the mind full of facts, and which include amongst those facts almost everything *except* what bears upon that one subject which it is most important for human beings to know, a voice from above sounds in my ears "Concerning spiritual gifts, brethren of this generation, I would not have you ignorant."

Brethren, what will it profit? Even a heathen poet asked the question, What will it profit to have measured and weighed out the whole realm of matter—to have explored and studied all the achievements of human thought, if after all, God's gift to the soul—His gifts of a new birth, of a real redemption, of a new insight into truth, of a robe wherein one day the soul may appear even before Him in His sanctity and in His justice without trembling and without confusion—if these are altogether ignored?

So, too, in this sentence of the Apostle I see a rule for forming friendships. The importance of friendship as exercising a decisive influence upon a man's character and life was, perhaps, as well understood in the ancient world, to say the least, as now. The ancients made friendships and kept them up in a more formal and regulated way than we do; and, like Cicero and others, they wrote elaborate treatises upon the subject, and reduced it as far as they could, to a matter of method and rule. Perhaps before the idea of a universal brotherhood in Christ had dawned upon the conscience of the world, a single sincere attachment between two human beings, had a significance which we to-day can with difficulty appreciate. But, at any rate, the ancients were right in estimating very highly the moral importance of friendship; for a friend—and there is scarcely a truth which a young man ought more carefully to lay to heart—a friend at once reflects and moulds character. His influence penetrates in a thousand ways into the recesses of thought and feeling. He leaves his mark there, most assuredly. He is always either a help or a hindrance, a blessing or a curse, as the case may be. In choosing a friend, therefore, or to speak more truly with a view to what is generally the fact, in allowing oneself to glide into a friendship, it is most important to ask ourselves what it is precisely that attracts us in the proposed friend? Is it his income? His great possessions? Or his splendid home? These are not the man who is to be our friend; they are but the accidents of his life, they are not its essence. Is it his fertile imagination, his vigorous reason and sparkling wit? These, alas! are compatible—and who does not know it?—with the worst degradation of the man himself. What is his real character? What are the qualities of his heart? What, properly speaking, are his spiritual endowments? What is his amount of faith in the Unseen? Of his hope in an eternal future, and his hope in the eternal love of God to man? These are the questions which should be answered concerning these spiritual girts. In a matter of such vital importance do not let us willingly be ignorant.

And, lastly, here is a rule for all steady and systematic efforts at self-improvement. It is common, but it is perilous, to get older without getting better; and improvement in outward circumstances, improvement in mental accomplishments, are not here, and now in question. Of the first it is written, "He shall carry nothing away with him when he dieth, neither shall his pomp follow him." Of the second "We know in part, and we prophecy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away." Improvement in spiritual endowments is the real point, if not in the present counterparts of those public gifts of illumination and utterance, of works of power, and works of mercy which St. Paul had in his eye when addressing the Church at Corinth, and especially in those personal and higher graces which the Apostle estimates so highly, and which as they are offered to all Christians by the Divine Spirit, so all Christians should know how to possess them,—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. These gifts of the Spirit do not pass away, they become incorporated with the Christian's life and character. They give it force and beauty here, and we do not take leave of them as we take leave of all else, when we reach the Gate of Death. We carry them with us into the Eternal Presence chamber.

Let us therefore, make the most of the means of grace, as they are termed, while we may. Of the certificated channels through which these gifts must reach us—of prayer, first of all, of the Divine Scriptures and the Holy Sacraments. Life is too short, my brethren, to allow any man to know, or to do, everything. There is much of which we may safely and even profitably be ignorant in this world; but as immortal beings we dare not ignore, we dare not neglect, the gifts which the Eternal Spirit bestows upon us here, that hereafter they may robe us in a happy immortality.

A Sermon

BY THE

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"*Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.*"—1 Corinthians xiii, 8-10.

If it were possible for us to forget all that we have ever learnt, directly or indirectly, of Christianity, and the teaching of the New Testament, and if the impressions of human nature which we get from the men and women around us, were the highest and noblest we could conceive of, our feelings on first reading this chapter would be of a strange description, we should probably be utterly bewildered. St. Paul is speaking here of what he calls "love," or as it is translated in our version "charity." In the last verse of the previous chapter he had given this solemn advice—"Covet earnestly the best gifts;" and then he adds "yet shew I unto you a more excellent way." He begins this chapter with an enumeration of some of those marvellous gifts which had been so richly bestowed upon the early Church, and which were its best weapons in its contest with the world. Such was the gift of tongues, or rather, here, of eloquence, the gift of prophesy or exposition, the gift of intellectual insight, the gift of faith which made men look smilingly on death, and gave them power to become the ministers of healing and life to others. All these gifts St. Paul possessed in the very fullest measure, day by day the power which they conferred upon him was being felt by all those with whom he came into contact, until he left his mark upon the world as perhaps no man has ever done since. Yet he declares these great, these surpassing gifts to be worth nothing without love. He goes further, "though," he says, "I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned;" though, that is, he were to live a life of the most intense self-devotion and boundless benevolence that a man could lead, and yet were destitute of love, it would profit him nothing. And then he goes on to give a description of love—love in the highest and purest sense—love to God and love to man, a love which knows no fear and no decay, which can reach to the farthest limits of earth, and rise to the purest heights of heaven; a love which can stoop to the lowest and most degraded, and yet can only be satisfied by God Himself.

A man who knew nothing of Christianity would, I say, feel bewildered when he read this sublime description. The whole picture is so unlike anything which we could have gathered from observation of the world, it is so strongly opposed to the maxims and habits prevailing among men generally, that we can hardly conceive the possibility of its being realized; we feel almost tempted to ask how a practical clear-sighted man like St. Paul could have offered to men a standard so impossible to reach, a character so hopelessly difficult to realize. And not only so, but we find him making this the one thing necessary for the Christian life; he sets all gifts aside in comparison with this, he says that faith itself, that mighty lever which can move the world, is, without charity, simply nothing.

Take one or two qualities which he mentions as belonging to charity, and see how far they are to be recognized as actually possessed by ourselves. "Charity," he says, "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own." The man whose heart is filled with charity—with love in its widest sense—will not be found amongst those who are pushing their way along in the race of life, who elbow their neighbours aside to get before them, who are so tenacious of what they call their rights that offence is easily taken, who are constantly detecting the motes in their brother's eye when they are almost blinded by the beam in their own. Seeketh not her own! There is something more than self-sacrifice here. Self-sacrifice may be, and sometimes is, only a refined kind of selfishness, the interests of others are studied because we find that they are identical with our own. But here there is an entire abnegation of self, self and self-interest are entirely lost sight of.

Or, again, charity believeth all things, hopeth all things. How different this from the maxims of the world. The world says "Suspect a man till you have reason for trusting him; never give a man credit for more good than ye know him to possess." That is, believe nothing that has not been proved, and never let hopefulness betray you into rashness. These are the maxims of cold common-sense, the maxims by which the world professes to be governed. If it were not that the lives of most men are better than their creed, the world would be more intolerable than it is. Now turn again to St. Paul "Charity believeth all things, hopeth all things." That is, the man whose Christianity is worth anything—for remember, without charity it is worth nothing—the man whose Christianity is worth anything, will never allow his faith to be shaken by the insincerity or ingratitude he may meet with, he will never allow his efforts to reclaim and strengthen his brethren, to be chilled or deadened by any amount of failure; a man may seem utterly insensible and dead to any appeal, charity will still believe that there is something in that man's nature which can be touched;

a friend who has been loved and trusted may suddenly be guilty of some great act of treachery, true charity will not be shaken out of her self-possession, she will still hope and believe against all appearance. This is true in great matters, it is, if possible, more true in small matters. Every day brings its trials; occasions when the temper is tried, when agreement between those in the same household, or the same parish is almost impossible, when something in our neighbour jars upon us and we are repelled from him. These are just the moments to test our charity, or which is the same thing, our Christianity. The man whose Christianity is only skin-deep, will be continually falling into the temptation of evil temper, or selfishness, or want of consideration, so there will be harsh words, quarrels, jealousies which are only smoothed over with difficulty. But true charity —the thorough-going Christian—is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil; the small affronts, the unpleasantnesses, the rudenesses of others make not the slightest difference to him, he goes on his way with serene composure, just as ready to help, just as affectionate, just as loving as he was before. He heareth all things, misunderstandings, sneers, falsehoods; in spite of these, and even by these his love is only brought out more fully.

Some would say such a picture as this is unreal, such a character would be altogethor unfit for the work-day world. It is simply the picture which St. Paul has drawn, only in infinitely truer and brighter colours; it is the picture which his Master drew before him, when He pronounced the meek and the merciful blessed, and which He commanded us to copy when He said, "Be ye perfect."

For the great lesson of this chapter, and of the text in particular, is that every man who wishes to live a Christian life must follow after charity. That is the foundation, it is the key-stone, it is the outcome and result of the whole. It is the only test we have, whether a man's religion is real or not; it is the fruit by which alone we can know the tree. A man's religious life, strictly speaking, is unseen and unheard, it is the life of his innermost soul. But the results of that inner life, its manifestation in the outward life, the actions, the words, form the only sign we have of the spiritual religion, by that alone we can judge the man. See then the necessity of our following after charity; because by this alone can we show to the world the truth we have won, the life we have been made partakers of.

But the words of the text go still further. St. Paul mentions once more those wonderful gifts which flowed down at Pentecost upon the Church—gifts some of which in their measure are still vouchsafed to us—but he says of one and all of them, they shall fail, they shall cease, they shall vanish away. The gift of tongues was given to the Church for a while, it did its work, it has now ceased. The gift of prophesy, of preaching the Gospel of Christ, that, too, shall fail, for a time will come when no preacher, however eloquent, will be needed to make Him known, for all shall know Him. The knowledge which is given to us here, will vanish away then, just as the pale stars of the dawn are lost in the blaze of the eastern sun. St. Paul's reference is doubtless to the second coming of Christ, and he applied it to the Church as a body: but we may and ought to apply it to ourselves as individual members of that Church.

We all possess gifts of some kind. I do not mean here by gifts, extraordinary talents or powers which distinguish a man from all those around him—I mean those spiritual graces which, given to us in germ as it were at our baptism, have been renewed and strengthened at our confirmation, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and ghostly strength, the spirit of knowledge and true godliness—or to sum them up in one word—*knowledge,* to direct us to things temporal and to guide us to things eternal. True, we may be little conscious of the possession of this gift, how small it is even in the wisest of us, God only knows, but it has been given to us, and we are responsible for its increase or diminution. As we get older, we are believed to become wiser, the costly lessons of experience, if not altogether thrown away, enable us to overcome difficulties and see our way more clearly as the years roll on, in the case of our worldly affairs, our business, our profession, our relations with the men around us. This then is the increase of our gift of knowledge in temporal matters. But there is another knowledge, a knowledge of spiritual matters, the wisdom of religious experience. This, too, is capable of increase as time goes on, and in those who are earnestly bent on working out their own salvation, it *does* increase year by year and even day by day. Look back on your earlier years, you who have been and are, wearing the yoke of Christ, and compare those days with the present. Much you may have lost, much of the glory, the freshness, the enthusiasm of your life when you entered upon your Master's service. But have you not gained, have you not learnt in the countless temptations God has enabled you to overcome, and the numberless difficulties He has led you through, in the hours of distrust and darkness, as much as in the hours of brightness and power, have you not learnt, I say, more of yourself, your own weakness and blindness, your own wilfulness and selfishness; have you not learnt more of Him, His saving power and strengthening grace, His infinite faithfulness and love? Yes, you have grown in wisdom, in the knowledge of your own heart and of God.

And yet, we only know in part, we only see as through a glass, darkly. We are still before the veil; in the spiritual as in the physical world we are surrounded on all sides by an infinity of which we know little save that there are points of light glimpses of revelation, which serve us for guidance to steer over the ocean of life. The discipline of life does make our knowledge fuller, does make our acquaintance with our own hearts and the Spirit, that is guiding and preserving us, larger and wider. And yet how little, how unspeakably little does the wisest and most spiritual man know of that eternal world, that eternal life, that eternal truth which he realizes as his most precious inheritance. How often is he startled by some discovery of his ignorance or surprised by some temptation into which he believed he could never have fallen. How inscrutable is the course of our life, how impossible to understand why some sufferings and trials are sent to us, why our powers are cramped and our opportunities of doing God's work limited by apparently adverse circumstances. We say to ourselves it is all for the best, yet we cannot repress a secret wish that we saw more clearly *how* it was for the best. We do indeed know now only in part, we see yet only as through a glass, darkly.

But when He shall appear, when the confusions and conflicts of life are left behind for ever, and dim twilight breaks into glorious day, then we shall be as He is, we shall know as we are known. The knowledge that we now have so often blended with ignorance, will be lost in the full deep knowledge we shall possess then.

But there is one part of our present spiritual life, and only one which will not vanish away then, which will be the same, only richer and stronger—that is love. So, then, this love or charity of which St. Paul speaks here, is the one eternal element in our lives, the one thing over which death and the grave have no power. For it is this, and this alone, that makes us like God Himself. All else will fade away in the light of His appearing, because all else bears the traces of earth and is marred by our weakness and incapacity. This alone is unearthly and immortal, bearing no trace of human blindness, but shining with the pure light of the Spirit of God.

Therefore, brethren, covet earnestly the best gifts, but especially follow after charity. Strive after the spirit of love, struggle to break down all barriers which selfishness and pride would erect between yourself and your brother, give yourself up to the workings of that Spirit who has declared His name to be Love. Love to God and love to man, these are the leading notes which alone can make your life harmonious and true, which can alone invest your Christianity with true power, which can alone make you realize that this life is something more than a preparation for the next, that even now you are living not in Time but in Eternity.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 49.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE REV.

PROFESSOR STANLEY LEATHES, M.A.

PREACHED AT ST. PHILIP'S CHURCH, REGENT STREET,
LONDON,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 15, 1872.

To know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."—Ephesians iii, 19.

My dear friends, it is a great pleasure to me to address you once more from this place. The high pressure at which we live in the present day makes it essential for us all to have some relaxation in our work. But those relaxations we must ever remember are but means to an end; they are not ends in themselves. We might wish to spend our days in ease and comfort, free from anxiety and toil, but that is not the law which is appointed to man here. We were sent into this world to work, and I have a work, and you have a work to accomplish while we are here. And all our relaxations, and every holiday we enjoy are but means to that important end, the better discharge of our duty. May God grant then to you, and to me, entering as we now are upon another round of annual labour, to work as in His sight, and to endeavour to discharge each one for himself, the particular duty that he has to do as well as he can do it, and ever in the fear of God.

Now the words I have just read, are part of that wonderful prayer which St. Paul offered up on behalf of his absent friends when he was in prison at Rome. He desired that they might be taught to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that they might be filled with all the fulness of God, and that, brethren, should be my prayer for you and your prayer for yourselves. For it is part of the ideal life of the Christian thus to know the Saviour Christ. Let us then, for a few moments this morning, ponder these wonderful words, and see if we can by any means learn from them somewhat of that love which passeth knowledge. You will observe that the Apostle here has chosen a very remarkable expression. He speaks of something in one breath which in the next he declares to be impossible. That which he desires for himself and for the Ephesians is that they may know the love of Christ, yet at the same time he tells them it is impossible to know it, that it passeth knowledge. It is a hyperbolical love, for the very word he uses here is part of the same Greek word which in one of its forms is imported into our own language as hyperbole. When we speak of anything hyperbolical—when we say a man's language is hyperbolical, we mean that it transcends the limits of reality and truth, that he is saying more than he is literally warranted in saying, and it is this kind of hyperbole which St. Paul actually attributes to the love of Christ. He says it surpasseth knowledge, it can never be known, and yet he desires that we should know it.

Now if you ponder these words you will see at once that there is a paradox here. It is one of those paradoxes of which the theory of Christianity is full; it is one of those paradoxes that admit of no explanation save in practice. If we theorize about it we shall get into hopeless confusion and perplexity, but if we try to act upon it we shall find everything smooth and as light as day. There are many such paradoxes continually presenting themselves. For example, there is that most common one of God's fore-knowledge or predestination, and man's free will. We know that all God's works are known unto Him from the foundation of the world. He knows what will be the ultimate destiny of every soul present, yet the marvellous and complex tenor of life is worked out by each separate person on his own free and individual responsibility. Each one knows he is free to choose the right or the wrong; each one knows it is given to him to act exactly as he pleases and as he sees fit to act, but, yet, for all that the Lord knows, and we may say in some sense, has predestined from infinite ages what the end shall be. We may meditate upon either of these conditions as long as we please, but we shall only involve ourselves in inextricable confusion. But this we do know that we can act as we please and that we are responsible to God for how we act. Work out this in practice and you will have no trouble about the reconciliation of God's fore-knowledge, and man's free-will, but dwell upon either to the exclusion of the other and you will never be able to invent for yourself even a satisfactory theory. So is it again with inspiration. It is very hard to decide what part man has in the Book of God, and how far he has been left to himself for the choice of his own words, or the selection of the particular events recorded. It is very difficult to decide where the limits of the operation of the Spirit of God are to be fixed, and we may dwell upon the one side of the question or the other, and may invent some theory which can be altogether contradicted by the due application of other facts; but as long as we bear in mind these two things, that there is the finger of God at work there, and the free agency of man, inasmuch as language is a human instrument, we shall not be perplexed by any theory, but our difficulties will resolve themselves in practice. And so is it with the love of Christ. That is a thing for which there can be given no definite measure. It is impossible to say, in such a way as that no man shall contradict you, that the love of Christ is such and such a thing. It is a thing that passeth knowledge and for the very reason that it passeth knowledge you cannot define or circumscribe it within the limits of knowledge; you cannot by any terms lay down and define what the love of Christ is and where it extends to, and yet for all that, it is a thing that we may know as certainly as we know our own existence, and it should be our greatest aim and end, and the object of our most earnest prayer that we may be brought to know that love of Christ which thus passeth knowledge.

And why cannot you know the love of Christ? Because it is not possible to state that love in any way which will inevitably bring conviction to the heart of any second person. You may state the love of Christ as you feel it yourself, as you see it has been exhibited in ten thousand ways in nature or in revelation, but you cannot so state it as to hedge your statement from every possibility of attack. It passeth knowledge, and because it passeth knowledge the love of Christ is a thing for the individual, and a thing for the whole human race, but the individual cannot express that love in such terms as that others shall be made perforce to understand it. Then, again, the love of Christ passeth knowledge, because it is a love which operates upon every single soul, upon every separate conscience. Christ's love for me is a different thing from His love for you, because He has dealt with you in a different way from the way in which He deals with me. He deals with each man in His own personal and separate individuality. He has a special love for every person and the love which He has for each is a personal individual love which though it resembles generally and specifically the love He has for all mankind is nevertheless a special and peculiar love for each personal man. And this is why the love of Christ, and the knowledge of that love is a thing which concerns us in our own personal existence, as it concerns no one else, and this is why I cannot make another man see that Christ's love for me is a reality, because "the heart knoweth its own bitterness, and no stranger intermeddleth with its joy." There is a love which the Saviour has for each of you, which is a peculiar and a special love, and you may be taught to know that love in knowing the Saviour; but if you know Him not it will be for you as it must be for all the world, a love which passeth knowledge. And this is why. The whole key to the knowledge of the love of Christ lies in something else. That is to say, it lies in faith. Christ may have a boundless love for you or for me, but as long as you or I believe it not, we shall be nothing the better for that love. You may pour down shower after shower upon the fruitful soil, and an abundant crop will be your reward; but in the same way shower after shower may be poured down upon the barren rock, and not one single blade of grass will you gather in return. So is it with the love of Christ.

He has shown and declared His love to all the world but there is no measure by which the whole world can be brought to know the love of Christ in such a way as to defy contradiction because it is of necessity a love which passeth knowledge. Therefore, if we would know this love that passeth knowledge we must come to the knowledge of it through faith. Faith is that which enables the heart to lay hold of the declaration of the love of God. God has declared His love for us in general terms; we can only make them special and personal by ourselves taking hold of and believing them. If, therefore, you would know the love of Christ, you must believe on Christ. It is by thus laying hold of the love of Christ that you can learn to know it though it passeth knowledge, and therefore the love of Christ is not a thing of the head, it is not a thing which the intellect may see and accurately define and describe; it is a thing which the heart alone can apprehend. Is it not so with all love? Think of the love of the person whom you love the best. Is it possible to write down that love with any degree of approximate accuracy? Certainly not. That love which expends itself in words is too often a very shallow love. The love which cannot be spoken out and cannot be written down, which cannot be uttered, which reveals itself in ten thousand little ways unobtrusively, and by the world at large unobserved; that is the kind of love which is deep, permanent, and real. And so it is with the love of God. He has not been hyperbolical in the expression of His love. The words which of all others declare His love are but three—"God is love." There is no hyperbole there. The hyperbole is not in the word but in the thing, and if you would know how hyperbolical the love of God is, you must enter into that love, and learn to feel it as a thing of your own, a thing for yourself. There was one way in which that love was declared, one chief and only way, and that was by the death of the Cross. And yet, take that very death of the Cross, and what is it. Does it not require faith to apprehend it? Does the person who knows nothing of Christ, see anything of love in the death of Christ? Does anyone whose heart has not been penetrated with the love of Christ, see anything of wisdom in the words of Christ, anything of grace in the actions of Christ, anything of love in the death of Christ? No my brethren, the thing is impossible. It is a personal thing which can only be brought home to the personal heart by the personal influence of the Spirit through faith. Have your hearts thus been penetrated with the love of Christ? Have you learnt to know how great that love is, and have you found to your personal reward that it is indeed a love which passeth knowledge?

Now, I said that the Cross was the measure of the love of Christ. If then you would know the love of Christ you must expect to know that love through a fellowship with His sufferings. If Christ learnt the love of His Father, as He tells us He did, through the Cross, how can we learn to know the love of Christ except through being ourselves participators in the Cross of Christ? And, therefore, if any of you at this time has any inward sorrow, any private cross, which weighs heavily upon you, Oh! think, I beseech you, that that may be to you a means through which you may learn to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge. But here it is emphatically a knowledge that can be apprehended alone by faith. It is hard to believe, when God smites us that in His stroke there is love, and yet it is chiefly through His smiting us that we learn to know His love. Ask, then, each one of you, that you may be taught to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, even though it be through suffering, and if at the present moment you are under any suffering, pray that it may be made to you the means by which you may learn to know how much the love of Christ surpasseth knowledge.

And then there is a purpose here also. All God's dealings have a distinct end in view. He knows the end from the beginning and He falters not; He pauses not; He makes no mistakes; He swerves not from His purpose. He knows what it is at the beginning, and carries it out to the end. And so here there is an end in view which His eye only can see, and that is that we may be filled with all the fulness of the love of God. Now St. Paul's words here are very remarkable. It is not strickly speaking "filled with all the fulness of God," but to use a phrase which we can scarcely employ in our language it is that we may be "filled into all the fulness of God," up to the measure of the fulness of God. And yet, observe, how very logical and accurate the expression is, because God is infinite and man finite. How then can the finite embrace the infinite? How can the finite comprehend or contain the infinite? We cannot thus be filled so as to contain God; we must be filled into or up to the fulness of God. For though we cannot grasp God because He is so far off, because He is so vast, yet we may ever reach Him because He is so near; for "in Him we live and move and have our being." He is at our right hand for evermore. He is with us now, and we have but to reach forth the finger of faith, and it shall touch Him in His veritable presence.

Thus, my friends, if you would know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, you must be filled with that knowledge up to the fulness of God. In Christ dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And though you cannot comprehend all the love and all the fulness of God, yet if your heart be taught through the spirit to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, then you shall find that love to be indeed your fulness here; and it shall evermore fill you fuller and yet fuller until you come to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ—unto the perfect man in heaven which has actually apprehended and touched it for evermore.

"TRIED TO THE UTTERMOST."

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. H. E. NOLLOTH, M.A.,

Incumbent Designate of St. John's, Plumstead.

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. NICHOLAS, PLUMSTEAD,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, JULY 28, 1872.

"*Thy word is tried to the uttermost; and Thy servant loveth it.*"—Psalm cxix, 140. (Prayer Book Version.)

The unknown author of the longest of the Psalms speaks of being "persecuted by princes," and "standing before kings," and, it is therefore thought that he may have been Daniel, or Ezra, or Nehemiah. By whomsoever it was written, it expresses well the mental state of those who had passed through the discipline of the Captivity. During that long, monotonous period of servitude, the memory of God's law came back to the faithful remnant, and stirred up in them deep longings, and fervent aspirations after the privileges which their fathers had enjoyed. Now, in their affliction, they had learned to "love God's statutes exceedingly." Now was fulfilled already in some degree the promise of the New Covenant, "on their hearts will I write My laws." The previous Psalm—the 118th—is regarded as having been composed for the joyful Passover, which followed the dedication of the Second Temple, when "the priests and the Levites purified themselves as one man, and the sons of Israel who returned from the Captivity did eat, and every one that separated himself unto them from the pollutions of the nations of the lands, to seek the Lord, the God of Israel" (Ezra vi, 19, 22). Thus, as soon as the Church of the restoration had ended their Paschal Hymn, they had provided for them a Psalm that was richly laden with Pentecostal fruits; "the law of God, written not on stony tablets, but on fleshy tablets of the heart." In the 118th

Psalm we had the " wondrous " character of redemption set forth; in the 119th we have the " wonders " of God's revelation. In the previous Psalm, the psalmist was delivered into a " wide, open plain " of freedom from trouble and oppression: in the 119th, into the freedom of a holy obedience to the law of liberty.

In every verse of the Psalm but one, reference is made to God's word, or law, or revealed will. The words which the writer employs are — " law, testimonies, ways, precepts, statutes, commandments, judgments, word, promise, faithfulness." In the authorized version, the text reads "Thy word is very *pure*;" "*tried*" or "*well-refined*," it should be, as we read in the margin, and I therefore prefer the more correct, as well as vigorous rendering of the Psalter in our Prayer-Books —"Thy word is tried to the uttermost; and Thy servant loveth it."

Expressive words! They describe to us the test, to which in every age the Holy Scriptures have been subjected; and the result of it; they come out pure, undimmed as gold "refined," and "purified seven times in the fire," and the servants of God have their love of it quickened thereby.

Especially do these words come home with power to the Christian's heart, at the present day. In this age every relic of antiquity, every venerable institution, has to stand upon its trial, and be subjected to the keen, cold light of modern criticism; the philosophers of the nineteenth century plunge all things into their crucible, that the true metal may be separated from the dross; and every day we hear of old histories that have proved to be myths, and of ancient beliefs that have been exploded as superstitions. We can hardly, therefore, expect that this oldest of books, treating of the most momentous of subjects—the soul of man, its origin and its destiny, its ruin and its restoration, its relation to the Past, the Future, and the Unseen—this book which claims to have a character distinct from that of every other book, to have been dictated by Infinite Wisdom, written by a Divine Author, using at intervals through a period embracing many centuries, divers human instruments, whose mind and will were overborne by the Spirit of God, who spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost—a book, which, in short, claims to be nought else but the voice of God speaking to men, and revealing to them His will in the end of their being—we can scarcely expect, I say, that such a book would be regarded as so venerable, and so sacred as to pass unchallenged. If we so imagined, indeed we should be deceived, and in this age especially, God's Word is "tried to the uttermost."

The attack may assume very different forms, as indeed it does. It may be arrogant and abusive, or refined and moderate in its tone. It may term the sacred writings a gross imposture, or admire their poetical beauty, and extol their pure morality. It may reject the Divine authority of the Word of God, and at the same time profess to revere the religious feeling, the deep thought, the lofty imagination of its authors. It may deny the Divine inspiration of the whole Bible, or dissect it, and profess to receive some portions of it as the Word of God, and reject others as of purely human origin; forgetting that the Sacred Writings are woven into one, by so many reciprocally-connecting links, that they must stand or fall together; the historical veracity of the part is inseparable from the inspiration of the whole.

Let us notice a few of the many ways, in which, at the present day, God's Word is "*tried.*"

1. There are the professors of "Natural Religion," who, while admitting the existence of a supreme Creator and upholder of all things, yet deem it unreasonable to suppose that He has made any other revelation of Himself than that which we can read in the pages of the book of nature. But if, as they allow, the knowledge that there is a God may be gleaned from His works, those works, if they reveal anything of His character, show by their mutual adaptibility, and in many other ways, that He is a God of love; nay the very name, by which the Deity is called by all the English-speaking peoples, is a witness to this; it is a contracted form of the familiar Saxon adjective "Good." Now, is it reasonable to suppose that a Being of universal benevolence would leave His intelligent creatures, capable of knowing, loving and glorifying Him, and conscious in themselves of immortality, in utter ignorance of the relation in which they stand towards Him? Leave them blindly to speculate on the causes of their being, nor reveal to them somewhat of that unseen country which lies beyond the grave? Scarcely will one be found, who would assert that man has *no need* of a revelation. "I deem it unnecessary," says Paley, "to

prove that mankind stands in need of revelation, because I have met with no serious person, who thinks that even under the Christian revelation, we have too much light, or any degree of assurance that is superfluous."

2. Others there are, who are offended at the *miracles* of Scripture. They deem it unreasonable to imagine that the "laws of nature" should be changed. But what can "nature," in this sense of the word mean, but the God of nature? Let men but speak of "nature" as active and not passive, as a cause instead of an effect, originating the laws which govern matter, instead of having them imposed upon her, and at once the word is only another name for that "Presiding Intelligence" of the Universe Which we call "God." And why, if He deem the occasion sufficiently important to justify the interference which He need but will, and it is accomplished, should He not alter or suspend His own laws? And is not the authentication of that revelation of Himself, which we have just been endeavouring to show it is only reasonable to believe that He would make, on that evidence of His character which may be gathered from His works,—is not such authentication, I ask, a sufficient cause for such interference? Would He expect those sentient beings whom He had Himself endowed with reason, to accept messages as from Him, whether through Prophet, or Law-giver, or Apostle, without appropriate evidence that the messenger was in communication with the Deity? And what evidence could be more appropriate than some coincident wonder in the natural world, proving indubitably that the God of Creation, in Whose hand our breath is, and Whose are all our ways, is He that is speaking to us? We might enlarge upon the harmony subsisting between the character of the miracle, and that of the message, whether of mercy, of warning, or of judgment, which it was designed to attest; for example, the galaxy of "mighty works" which clustered round His greatest revelation, the "Word Incarnate" and "bare witness, that He came forth from God," were entirely consonant with the object of His mission; they were wholly works of *mercy*. A mere barren "wonder," or an act of judgment, Christ ever refused to work. Miracles have well been termed "the royal signet of the King of kings, with which He stamps authentic messages from heaven."

3. Other critics there are, who adduce the alleged *discrepan-*

cies of the Bible. We reply, first, that while we maintain that "every word of God is pure," and was free from all error, when it came from its Divine source; it does not follow that every manuscript and translation is completely perfect; numbers and names in genealogies, are very liable to suffer in transcription, from the peculiarities of language. Second, many difficulties which present themselves to the reader of a translation, vanish when we consult the original. Suffice it that the Bible fulfils its great practical object as a revelation to mankind at large. Third, in the Gospels, while there is no real discrepancy, there is a divergence, for which we are thankful, for it presents us with the portraiture of Christ from four different points of view. How many difficulties would be explained if only we knew a little more of the circumstances! How often, in our every-day life, we receive two accounts of an occurrence, which we are unable to reconcile, until a third narrator, supplying further information, shows us that *both* the former, after all were right. Apply this principle, the fruit of ordinary experience, to such Evangelical divergencies, as the oft-quoted one between St. Matthew and St. Luke with respect to the crucified thieves. The former tells us that both blasphemed; St. Luke, that one repented and was forgiven. Each mentions the feature in the incident which struck him most forcibly: St. Matthew's design was to set forth the aggravation of the sufferings of Christ; while a distinguishing feature in St. Luke's Gospel, which was written for Gentiles, is the encouragement for repenting sinners with which it abounds. Truly the difficulties which unbelievers pretend to find in the Word of God, only show how anxious they are to get rid of a revelation which condemns their lives of carelessness, or of sin, and to say in their hearts with the fool of whom the Psalmist speaks, "There is no God!"

4. Just as remarkable are the faults which men find with the *astronomy* and *geology* of the Bible. The Bible speaks of "the sun rising," whereas, say they, Copernicus has proved that the sun does not really rise at all, but that the earth turns round and catches, or loses his beams on the portion of her surface, turned towards, or away from him. We need only say in reply, that relatively to us, the sun *does* rise, and that no really scientific man would complain that when the Bible speaks of Lot entering into Zoar, it uses the common language of all mankind, which we find even now in our current almanacks,

so many centuries after the discoveries of Copernicus, and tells us that "the sun was risen upon the earth," instead of puzzling plain people for ages with such a statement as this :—" Palestine had revolved until its tangent plane coincided once more with the solar azimuth ?" We will not enter upon the question as to how far the system of Copernicus accounts for the sunrise, now that the whole solar system is proved to be in motion towards a point in the heavens near the bright star of "Lyra."* Again, geology tells us of a long series of changes before any trace of man's presence is discovered upon the earth. This, sceptics affirm, is inconsistent with Genesis I. How so ? Two perfectly satisfactory explanations of this seeming inconsistency have been given: First the "days" of creation may mean long periods, just as in prophecy we have "a day for a year ;" or second, *countless ages may have passed away between the time spoken of in the first verse,* when "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth," and the time spoken of in the third verse, when "God said, Let there be Light, and there was Light ;" during which, as the second verse informs us, the Spirit of God "brooded" (as the word should be rendered) over the face of the waters, and prepared the earth gradually for the habitation of the masterpiece of Creative skill.

5. One more instance of the triumph of the Truth over its assailants we must give; and that is in the *historical veracity* of the Bible. All other ancient books which claim a sacred character, such as the *Koran,* the *Hindu Vedas,* the *Zend-avesta,* &c., consist of a long, monotonous series of religious appeals, invectives, and exhortations. In the Old and New Testaments, on the other hand, we have the history of a long and connected sequence of events, written by many authors, through many ages ;—describing man's need of Redemption, the gradual preparation of the way of the Redeemer, His advent, and its immediate results. Four-sevenths of the whole consist of narrative; while the remaining books are nearly all fixed by clear internal evidence to their place in the history. Now, observe what is one of the most remarkable proofs of the truth of God's Word, that while all other ancient, and many comparatively modern histories, have been found to bristle with absurd myths in the increased knowledge of this learned age; yet, although the countries in which the scenes of the Bible are

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* Birks' Bible and Modern Thought.

laid, have been fully explored, and their histories, as far as possible, carefully investigated, nothing but what is illustrative and confirmatory has been discovered; where reliable information has been gained not one historic fact has been affected otherwise. Discoveries in Egypt, Persia, Assyria, Babylon, have "tried" the historic truth of God's Word "to the uttermost." Thirty years ago, a German critic, Von Bohlen, undertook to prove that the author of the *Pentateuch* knew nothing of Egypt, because he speaks of vines and grapes there, and of buildings of brick, and asses and sheep in ancient Egypt. Not long after, Rosellini and others found representations of all these, preserved, as if by Divine Providence, in the Pyramids; and more than all, the Israelites themselves unmistakably portrayed in their captivity. Such instances might be multiplied, but it is needless to do so. God's Word has been tried "to the uttermost," and not one jot or one tittle has been shaken. It is the reflection of the mind of that God whose name is Truth. It is "great, and shall prevail." Generation after generation of its assailants, poor sceptic mortals, whose frailty is only equalled by their presumption, come up, spend all their puny strength in the onslaught, and then sink forgotten, like the waves which lash the white cliffs of our native land. This Book, alone in the Universe, shall survive the final crash of all things else; "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but Thy Word, O God, shall never pass away!" The faith of some may suffer. Puffed up with self-conceit, and doting about foolish questions, and strifes of words; putting away faith and a good conscience, they may make shipwreck concerning the faith: and their punishment is sure. "They shall pierce themselves through with many sorrows." Some may turn away from wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But the result of the ordeal is ever the same with the people of God:—"Thy servant loveth it!" It is the transcript of the mind of God; and, loving the original, he loves the copy. The infidel may rage, and the worldly-wise philosopher imagine vain things concerning the Book of God, but the Christian will prize it the more. The world's billows may foam round the ark of their refuge, but its shelter is dearer to the children of Noah! Tempests may shake the old oak's boughs, but the ivy clings to it the more closely.

So, as years roll on, and the servant of God, daily exercised in the study of the Word, and praying "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law,"—becomes "mighty in the Scriptures," and takes more and more delight in them, the more vividly will he realize the feeling of the Psalmist, "Oh, how I love Thy law; it is my meditation all the day." His experience will be that of a good old English divine.* "Whereas, at my entrance, I took even the choicest part of the Bible to be at best but like some Indian province, wherein, though mines and gems were more abundant than in other countries, yet they were but sparingly to be met with, here and there; after a competent stay, my ensuing perusals presented it to me, if not as a *royal* jewel made of gold and precious stones, yet (which is more glorious) like Aaron's breastplate, a *sacred* jewel, the particular instructions for which were given by God Himself, and which, besides the various number of flaming gems set in fine gold and placed in a mysterious order, was ennobled by that *Urim-ve-Thummim,* wherein God vouchsafed to reveal Himself to mortals . . . . This experiment keeps me from wondering to find in the inspired poet's description of the man he attributes blessedness to, that 'his *delight* is in the law of the Lord, and in His law will he meditate day and night.'"

Trivial and insignificant indeed will the difficulties raised by rationalistic objectors, appear to him who has thus discovered the real preciousness of the Divine Word, who has learned by the aid of the Holy Spirit, shining upon the sacred pages of the Book of God, to believe in Christ to the saving of his soul; who has found rest, and peace of conscience, and peace with God, beneath the shadow of the Cross. He can say, with regard to cavillings such as those which I have instanced, what the greatest of modern interpreters has said concerning objections made to the history of the flood. "Reason, guided by the Divine Spirit, has brought me to believe in Christ. Christ has delivered to me the Old Testament as the Word of God. I know that it was received as such by the Son of God Himself. Therefore my *reason* convinces me that it would be most *unreasonable* to reject this history, because I cannot explain how some things were done by God in that which is itself miraculous. Where am I to stop, if I am to abuse my reason, and make it an instrument for unbelief in such miracles as these? How then can I believe in the Incarnation of Christ? How in the

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* Robert Boyle.

Mystery of the Trinity? How in my own Resurrection? I pause at the brink of the precipice, and recede from the gulf of unbelief lying beneath me. Let me read this history by the Light of the Gospel of Christ, Who is the Highest Reason, the Divine Wisdom, and in Whom reason itself has taught me to believe. Then I shall not be perplexed by any difficulties in this history. Rather, I shall rejoice in them. For they are trials of my faith in Him: and these trials are my triumphs. They are the leaves and flowers of which the crown of Faith is woven; they are the golden wings and pinions on which she soars to glory; they will waft me onward in my course through this lower world to that Great Day, the Day of Doom, when the earth itself will sink in an abyss of flame, and when the Ark of Christ's Church will ride safely on the fiery surge and roaring billows of that general conflagration, and those who believe in Him will come forth with exceeding joy to dwell with Him in glory for evermore."

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN.

[No. 50.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. CANON LIDDON, D.D., D.C.L.,

Dean Ireland's Professor of Exegesis,
University of Oxford.

PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 11, 1872.

" So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him."—1 Kings xix, 19-21.

Here, my brethren, we see one of the methods by which the prophetical ministry was propagated and maintained in Israel. It was not, you may have remarked, like the Jewish priesthood a matter of hereditary descent. The son did not become a prophet because his father had been a prophet before him. Like Jeremiah each prophet was the subject of a special predestination to his work. "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." But each prophet was called to his work by some especial token or influence, and then, either as a student in one of the colleges or schools of the prophets, as they were called, or as an attendant upon a great teacher, he received a kind of education for his future life.

Elisha appears to have been a man of substance. He was ploughing in the field with twelve yoke of oxen, at Abel-meholah in the valley of the Jordan, when Elijah passed on his way back from the great vision which he had received in Horeb. Elijah does not seem to have spoken; he merely cast his mantle on Elisha, and then passed on. This act, indeed, was symbolical. It had, like many of the former acts of the prophets, such as rending the dress, or putting ashes on the head, an ascertained and recognized meaning. The prophet's mantle was a visible sign of the robe of spiritual power which encompassed him, and to cast the mantle on another was to call him to share the labour, the glory the difficulty, the responsibility, the danger of the prophetic office. Although Elijah had not spoken, this significant action was perfectly understood. Elisha obeyed its purpose, and he ran after the silent prophet who was already vanishing from his sight. He had one, only one condition, he would just take leave of his parents and receive their blessing, and then he would follow the prophet. Elijah assents. But Elisha must return soon considering the greatness of the destiny before him. The original would be here better rendered "Go, return, for how great a thing have I done unto thee!" Elisha is bent upon showing the undivided allegiance which he owes to the prophet—the completeness of his self-surrender. Up to that moment his farm on the banks of the Jordan had been his all, as in a later age their boats and nets had been everything to those fishermen on the sea of Galilee who were also predestined to the apostolate of the world. Elisha does not linger to drop regrets over a cherished past, from which he is parting for ever; he forthwith slays the oxen with which he had just been ploughing, and he takes even the plough tackling for fuel, by which he may burn their flesh, and he gives one parting entertainment to his acquaintances in the neighbourhood, that they may have no doubt either about his goodwill towards themselves, or of his fixed determination and lofty resolution, and then he leaves the scene of his labours, he leaves his fields, his home, his all, to become the servant of Elijah. Is this, think you, to be looked upon as only and strictly an incident in the life of an ancient prophet. Has it no permanent, no higher application? Has it no human significance?

There is some risk, my brethren, of blinding ourselves to the real meaning of the Old Testament, of its urgent and striking appeals to the human conscience, to the Christian life, by saying of this and that thing, it is only Oriental and has, therefore no relevancy for a modern European. Certainly, there is a superficial element of custom and of ceremony in the life described in the Old Testament, which does belong to the ancient East and which is untransferable to the circumstances of our own day and country. But human nature on the one side, and the great laws of God's providential dealings on the other, were in the East two thousand eight hundred years ago, exactly what they are now, and what occurred then, was, as an Apostle says, "written for our learning that we through patience and comfort of the ancient Scriptures might have hope"—hope as well as other virtues which are to be won from their perusal.

The call of Elisha has its place not merely in the history of his order, not merely in the history of his country, but in the history of humanity, and as such it must be regarded as an astonishing instance of the power of religious influence. The silent prophet passes; he drops his mantle, and the life of another fellow man is agitated to its centre, to its inmost depths; its whole current and direction is from that moment changed; he yields to an attraction; he does not analyze it, he obeys. And it may be well to ask ourselves in what—putting aside for to-day, but by no means ignoring it, the great question of God's supernatural grace—in what did this influence, viewed on its human side, in what did this attraction consist? For it is not to be supposed that the obedience of Elisha had nothing to do with those motives and laws of conduct which govern the actions of thoughtful and conscientious men now. It is not to be supposed that Elijah put forth some force which was literally magical—magical in such a sense, that it exerted upon Elisha's will an influence for which no account could be given in reason, a magnetic influence which *could not* but be obeyed. Had, indeed, this been the case, the interest of this history would have been shifted from the department of spiritual and moral life to the department of physical life and it would be perhaps more properly investigated in some lecture-room at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, than from the pulpit of this Cathedral. No! mighty as was the influence of Elijah, Elisha's liberty was not restrained, still less destroyed by it. He was perfectly free to have resisted it. If he did not do so, if he yielded at once, if he decided instantaneously on an obedience which, as we may for the moment think, ought to have been preceded and justified by an exhaustive discussion, this was because there must have been a preparatory educational process going on for some time within him. He must have had his thoughts, affections, aspirations which only waited the occasion to be combined, to be expressed in action; and so when the great prophet passed by him all the scattered reasons for being drawn towards him coalesced into a single ray of moral light and moral warmth, and determined his future disciple's course,—impelled him to an act of such unreserved obedience.

It is, then, material to ask what must have been at least some of the motives which led Elisha thus to obey.

And, first, Elijah would have represented in Elisha's eyes a great cause, a great or imperious idea, or truth, which had lain for centuries in the soul of every Israelite; that idea was the existence, the manifestation of the one living and true God who had revealed Himself to Israel. For while the surrounding nations were in different degrees of heathen darkness and degradation, Israel by a singular exercise of God's favour, had been, indeed, chosen to know His will, and in that knowledge to know much—though by no means with all the fulness which we Christians now have the means of knowing Him—of His character, of His nature, of His attributes. To treasure that knowledge, to hand it on from generation to generation, to make it the inspiring principle of national as well as of individual thought and life,—this was the appointed task of the sacred people, again and again prescribed in their law, again and again enforced by the exhortations of their prophets, again and again illustrated by the lives and by the works of their most representative saints and leaders. In quiet times not merely every prophet, every member of the priesthood, and of the Levitical tribe, but even every Israelite in some sense represented this great truth, for every Israelite was admitted by circumcision into a covenant with God, which bound him to loyalty to God's revelation of Himself, just as every baptized Christian in this Cathedral bears the sacred sign, as our baptismal service expresses it, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ Crucified, but manfully fight under His banner against sin, the world and the devil, and to continue like a loyal and faithful soldier to serve Him to his life's end." In quiet times this representative duty of every believer in a revelation, towards the revelation which he believes, is accepted, at least in terms, without difficulty. It is only, as our Lord said, "when persecution or tribulation arises, because of the world," that certain classes of character are, as a matter of course, offended.

When Elijah appeared upon the scene of history it seemed as if the revelations committed to Israel, were on the point of being trodden out by a young and vigorous idolatry. The marriage of Ahab, the king of Israel, with Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, the king of Sidon, had led to the propagation of the Queen's religion, the worship of the Phœnician Baal, one of those seductive varieties of worship of the vital forms of nature in a personified shape which exercised so extraordinary a sway over the imagination and reason of the ancient world; and which, although in modern times they have adopted a more refined guise, are by no means strange or unwelcome to the modern world. So seductive was that superstition, and so commanding the influence of the court, so vigorous, so trenchant the policy of the Queen that seven thousand was the total number of Israelites who had escaped the taint,—who had not bowed the knee to the image of Baal. And at great trial times like these, great causes become almost necessarily identified with the names of individuals. Truths are, for a time impersonated in a single man. And Elijah was to the revelation of the one God, Maker of heaven and earth, what at a later age St. Paul was to the truth of man's justification, through Christ's merits without legal obedience—at least in certain portions of the Church—what St. Athanasius was, during the great Arian struggle to the true Godhead of Jesus Christ, as it had been taught by the Apostles.

As men looked on Elijah moving rapidly from one scene of danger to another, in those troublous times, the whole history of the earlier, the old Mosaic revelation seemed to live again, seemed to speak in him; behind his individual voice and gesture there was the felt presence of a great and living cause,—of a mighty and eternal Truth; and as a consequence he exercised an influence greatly out of proportion to his personal position. It was not the man himself, it was the Divine cause, it was the heaven-sent revelation which he represented, which won, which enchained to him the hearts of those who still believed in it. Elisha bent before the truth of which his master was himself the servant.

My brethren, the first condition of a deep religious influence, proceeding whether from individuals or from Churches, is a clear, positive creed—clear and positive whether it be large or small. A man must know, at least, what he does believe. Elijah would have been altogether powerless, had he only insisted on the falsehoods and superstitions of Jezebel and her prophets. He would have been powerless had he merely surrounded the revelation of Sinai with a garniture of the finest sentiment and poetry, leaving it doubtful whether he himself believed it to be God's truth or not. He was powerful because men knew that he had no sort of doubt about his creed, about its exact frontier, about its absolute certainty; and Elisha felt the passage, not of a mere man, but of a mighty cause or truth represented in the man, and he obeyed it.

But then secondly, in representing a great cause, a mere official representation is not enough. For religious influence personal qualities are wanted,—qualities in harmony with the requirements of the cause, or truth represented. Eli and his sons represented the Mosaic revelation to Israel in their day, but they only made the Lord's people to transgress. Alexander the Sixth, and Leo the Tenth, represented Christianity in an official sense of the term to Western Christendom, but they certainly did not recommend it to the consciences of men. The ordinary Hanoverian Bishops, of a century ago, were by their office representatives of Christianity in the Church of England, but, with a few splendid exceptions, their representation, too, was strictly heartless, official, and powerless where it was not, as in Hoadley's case, utterly repulsive. In order to reach human hearts and mould the affections, some sort of personal conformity to the ideal represented is needed, as well as the official right to represent. And Elijah would have been felt by Elisha to have this personal title to represent this cause of God superadded to the official one. Every Israelite we may be assured, whether friend or foe, whether in open league with the apostate court of Jezebel, or in secret correspondence with the scattered schools of the prophets, every Israelite had heard of the stern mien and lofty proportions of a character which seemed to its contemplators to belong to another world. They knew that if anywhere, here was a perfect simplicity of purpose; here was a determination to live and to die for the sake of the God of the Patriarchs who had brought Israel out of Egypt, who had spoken from Sinai. They knew that here was an unflinching courage which shrank not from encounter with the cruel, the wily idolatress who ruled the policy of Israel. They must have been well aware that the ties of flesh and blood did not fetter the great prophet's liberty; for like John the Baptist, nine centuries later, he had prepared for his ministry in the solitude of the desert; and he then had suddenly appeared in the very palace of the weak and apostate monarch, to denounce his sin, and foretell the judgment which awaited him. In an age of decaying faith, in an age of progressive moral deterioration, in an age of general apostasy, Elijah stood forth from among the mass of men in almost solitary grandeur. He must have been felt to be the typical saint and hero of the old Theocracy; he must have been recognized as embodying in the highest degree the moral power which belonged to a life so shaped and so led as to express before men's eyes his strong and firm conviction of the Sinaitic revelation. True it was, as we have heard in this afternoon's lesson, that Elijah too was at times subject even to the deepest sense of discouragement. When, after his great victory over the assembled prophets of Baal upon Carmel, it seemed for a moment as if the tide of public feeling in Israel had really turned—men cried in their enthusiasm, "The Lord, He is the God! the Lord, He is the God"—but the triumphant change was but of short duration. The day of Carmel was soon forgotten; Ahab was still Ahab, and Jezebel had not ceased to be Jezebel; and the multitude, which, for a moment, had obeyed with fervour the authority of the prophet, soon fell back into the practice of the ensnaring and voluptuous rites of the Phœnician God with a new enthusiasm.

And then Elijah felt that despondency of which great and ardent souls alone are capable. God seemed to be hiding His face; the prophet's faith was almost slipping from him, the whole order of the moral world was, in his eyes, for the moment confused, dark, incomprehensible, out of course. Jezebell was again in power. She was menacing his life, and he, in truth, is weary of his life,—weary of the apparently hopeless struggle in which he is engaged, and he returns to the southern desert in which he had learned his earliest lessons, where he is well out of the way of the levity of the frivolity of his apostate countrymen; where he is face to face with the savage desolation of nature in a scene that seems to correspond to the blank of his own inward misery. He longed to die, and when a voice from above reaches his conscience in his retreat—"What doest thou here Elijah?" he can only reply by a bitter complaint that God has abandoned His cause, that He has left His prophet to struggle undefended, alone, vanquished. Does this forfeit the prophet's influence? Is it fatal to the commanding, to the unique greatness of his character? Certainly, we must admit it would have been a more perfect course to have trusted God throughout—to have trusted Him in failure, not less than amid success; but Elijah, great as he was, was not the all perfect; and his failure was itself one of those forms of failure which are only possible to faith and devotion. They to whom life seems worthless because God's cause, not theirs, but God's, is imperilled or defeated for the time, are, in all generations among the few. To the many, the whole question is of no great concern. Whether the Church of Christ is winning her way among human souls, or losing it; whether she is extending the frontiers of the Redeemer's kingdom, or barely maintaining them; whether her ministers are speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, or are pandering weakly to the popular unbelief—all this troubles them not. They eat, they drink, they walk, they sleep as if all were well, just as did their fathers in the olden days before them. The anguish, the discontent, the fierce desperation of Elijah are the products—it may be they are the unregulated and diseased products—but they are the products of a noble passion, whereof the many know nothing; it is the noble, the generous passion which is careful only for the honour of God,—which is uncontrollable when He seems to be defeated or dishonoured. No! If Elisha did know of Elijah's retreat in profound discouragement, almost in despair, to the rocks of Horeb, he would not have been—I dare say it—less open to the great prophet's influence. The poignant despondency of a great faith is almost its virtue. Elisha would have felt not the less drawn to the solitary at Horeb than to the conqueror at Carmel.

There is a third element of influence yet, beyond;—the influence which belongs to a soul often in communion with God. This is less easy to seize, to describe or to measure, than the weight which belongs either to the representation of a great cause, or truth, or to personal elevation of character. This cannot be mapped out in words or in actions. It is nothing exactly tangible; it is an atmosphere which hovers around a life and which we are conscious of breathing but that is all. When we approach it, it is not a matter of manner or gesture, of expressive words and studied silence. It is not to be resolved into any outward form; it is too volatile, if you like, it is too strictly super-sensuous—it is too altogether appertaining to the region of spirit, to be registered by any definite tests and marks in the sphere of matter. Yet who has not sometimes felt this indescribable influence, this sure certificate of nearness to God, which the few privileged souls of both sexes in all stations of society, unconsciously to themselves, but most surely exert? It is something beyond character: it is tone. It is a something beyond goodness: it is holiness. It needs no language to express it: it is felt instinctively. Elisha may well have felt it—as we read the narrative we know it—as Elijah passed along the field of Abel-meholah.

And this history suggests two sets of considerations—one for those who exert religious influence, the other for those who yield to it.

And first for those who exert it. All wise and thoughtful people may well shrink, my brethren, from the great but unavoidable responsibility of doing so; the responsibility of saying, whether in words or by acts, to others—it little matters —"Follow me! Follow me upwards through this path in the light of this or that creed, towards the Throne of Light." Many men profess altogether to decline any such responsibility, and yet it is certain, that do what we will, we cannot, any one of us, but exert some religious influence. Every man is assuredly the Apostle of something, of evil if not of good. Our very presence is of itself the propagation of some faith. Whether we will or not, we are leading men: we are leading those around us in some direction.

"We scatter seeds with careless hand,
And dream we ne'er shall see them more;
But, for a thousand years
Their fruit appears
In weeds that mar the land,
Or healthful store.

The deeds we do, the words we say,
Into still air they seem to fleet,
We count them ever past,
But they shall last
In the dread Judgment Day;
And we shall meet."

It is better, then, to make a virtue of what is already a necessity,—to wield and exert usefully, a talent of which we cannot dispossess ourselves altogether, if we would. Some of us are teachers: what is the influence we are exerting on our pupils? Many of us are masters or mistresses: what is the influence we are bringing to bear upon our servants? Others are parents. How are you influencing—in some important way you must be influencing—the future of your children? Ah! but you say—"we wish we could be of use in this way, but then it is an affair of temperament; some people seem to understand it, others do not; and we are among the number." No, brethren, the explanation is simpler, it is more just than this. If when Elijah cast his mantle upon Elisha—the mantle of his creed, of his conduct, of his life,—Elisha does not respond, there may be another explanation of the failure than that which you are thinking of. Success is impossible, if Elijah represents nothing clear and certain. If he does not know his own mind, if he is only trying to win converts to a few private guesses or crochets of his own, instead of for a creed which has come from heaven. Success is improbable, again, if Elijah's life is quite out of keeping with his creed, if he is felt to be incapable of that which he recommends, if he has done and ventured nothing for the cause he advocates. It is improbable, too, if he has nothing about him of the air and bearing of an envoy of God, if he is obviously devoted to this world, and only alludes to the next in an official or formal way, and without the accent of a man to whom it is a serious reality. Doubtless God may make His truth do its own work, through His grace in human hearts, in spite of the inconsistencies of its representatives. But then I am speaking of what is probable, and, as a rule, God works through instruments. As a rule Elisha is won by the decision, by the consistency of the unworldliness of Elijah as much as by the apparent intrinsic claims of that which he represents.

And, lastly, there is instruction here for those who yield to religious influence. Some of us, I suppose, at least have known in life something like the passage of an Elijah in our past lives. A religious influence has swept across our path, placing truth, placing duty more clearly before us than we ever knew them before, recommending them by an example of high-minded devotion,—of simple, of disinterested life. We have felt its power; have we obeyed it?—It may be after a legitimate, a wise hesitation such as was Elisha's, but still, have we obeyed it? Had Elisha refused to acknowledge what was meant by the casting of Elijah's mantle, who can know how vast would have been the difference to the kingdom of Israel, to the kingdom of Judah, to the kingdom of Syria, to the kingdom of God in each, and to himself above all. He was no longer in the same moral position after the Divine call had reached him; he could no longer survey, if he would, his twelve yoke of oxen with a perfectly easy conscience as if he had really no duty, no destiny, excepting that of ploughing the field in Abel-meholah. A spell from heaven had crossed his path, and he must decide, either deliberately to acknowledge, or deliberately to ignore it. So it may be, or has been with us. The history of this afternoon's lesson will have recalled to those of us who know our Bible, at least two passages in the life of our blessed Redeemer—the call of the disciples, and the call of the man who wished first to bury his father. In our Lord's case it is observable that the call to instant obedience is much more peremptory than in Elijah's. He commands in terms: "Follow me." Elijah only suggests by a symbolical action. Our Lord will allow of no delay even to perform the last duties to a parent's memory. Elijah has no hesitation in allowing Elisha to take leave of his father and mother before entering on the prophetic life. The difference is to be explained by the intrinsic difference between the person of the prophet and the person of the Redeemer. Elijah did but represent the cause of God. In Jesus, as His Apostle said, there dwelt "the whole fulness of the Godhead bodily." Elijah's conduct although that of a saint and hero, was not absolutely perfect. In the life of Jesus, no trace of shortcoming could possibly be detected by the most cynical criticism. They who came near to Elijah came near to one who was irradiated by constant communion with God; they who came near to Jesus, were as the seraphim and cherubim round the throne, whether they knew it or not, close to the very form which the All Holy had assumed on earth. The greater urgency of our Lord is proportioned to His unspeakably higher and more imperative claim. And it is with Him—and not with His prophets, not with any of His instruments or agents—that we have to do. Amid our most trivial duties in this life, on days which are passing by us in the usual round of uneventful routine, He may speak to us as never before. A quiet word may be dropped by a friend—a sentence read in a book—a thought lodged we know not why, or how, in the mind, and we are laid under obligations to a new and more imperious view of life and duty. Not Elijah, but Elijah's Lord has passed and cast His mantle on us.

There is of course, abundant room for self-delusion of many kinds in the supposed visit of a heavenly call. We may read our fancies in the skies. If we do not take care we may transfigure our own *wishes* into a Divine voice by a process so subtle as to impose upon ourselves. But we are tolerably safe if two conditions are observed. If, first, the duty or line of life prescribed is unwelcome to our natural inclinations; and if, secondly, it does not contradict what we know God has taught us hitherto—if it is an extension of His earlier teaching, not its condemnation. No one who believes that our Lord Jesus Christ is present by His spirit in His church can doubt that He will, from time to time, speak thus to souls in virtue of His own promises. No one who knows anything practically of the lives of earnest Christians will question the fact of His having done so. And to listen for the footsteps of the Divine Redeemer passing by us in the ordinary conditions of life is a most important part of the probation of every man. How much may depend on following when He beckons us to some higher duty, to some more perfect service, we shall only know when we see all things as they really are, in the light of His Eternity.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED AT BEVERLEY MINSTER, BEVERLEY,

ON SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 8, 1872.

"*Thou that hearest prayer.*"—Psalm lxv, 2.

We all believe that there is a God; and that the Holy Bible is the Word of God; but, mark, I pray you, the inevitable truth respecting prayer which this twin-belief compels. The text is a compendious synonym for God, in fact, "Thou-that-hearest-prayer" is only a periphrasis, or other name, for Jehovah. It is the essence of the Nature of God that He is a prayer-hearer. If God cease to hear prayer, the text logically implies, that, God ceases to be God. But are we prepared for the other hemisphere of the correlative truth of our text? For, you perceive, that it is what is termed a correlative truth; that is, it cannot be true without another implied truth latent in itself being true also, completing the full-orbed idea. What is that truth? That if the Creator, by the very essence of His Nature, must be a prayer-hearer, the creature, by the very essence of his nature, must be a prayer-offerer; for how can God hear, if neither angel nor man pray? What a tremendous conclusion is awakened, and hurled upon the startled conscience, out of the depths of the eternal laws which bind man to God—if God be not God, if He hear not prayer, man is not even human if he be not a man of prayer! We can now understand why Christ restores to us our humanity in making us "partakers of the Divine Nature;" and why of newly converted Saul it was said "Behold! he prayeth!"

But, if God be by His essence a hearer of prayer, and man by his very nature a pray-er of prayer, how say some among us that there is no law amongst God's laws, or power amongst the forces, as prayer? Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God—from Abel to Jesus, and from Pentecost until now—for we have, for near six thousand years, testified of Him that He "heareth prayer," which He heareth not, if there be no such power, or law, in the design and nature of things, as prayer. If such science is right, we all must be wrong; the Bible a forgery, and Christianity a fable; but if such science is only "philosophy, falsely so called," and prayer is as substantive a power, in its own kingdom, as electricity in its own, then their theory not only denies to its apostles the title of Christians, but saps the very foundation of their claim to be men!

Now, without prejudice or bigotry, taking the text as the inspired message of God to us dependent creatures, let us calmly argue out this practical, common-sense question; praying, as I do fervently, that the result may be the deepening of the conviction in our souls, that prayer is the essential bond which binds our whole three-fold nature, in body, soul, and spirit, to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I will throw the text into the following form:—*Is prayer to Almighty God the rational act of a rational immortal creature?*

1. *What is the essence of true religion?*
2. *What is prayer in relation to true religion?*

What is the essence of true religion? As the baptized flock of the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep, you have a right to refer to us, the ordained successors of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of your souls, the doubts and difficulties of belief which are suggested to you in the six-days' battle with faith and patience. We hear sometimes grave and specious doubts as to the philosophy and efficacy of prayer; it is not journals and works of a low order only, which thus give the lie by implication to the utterance of God in our text. Not a few are sorely troubled by the clashing of the sermons of the two rival preachers, of the Sabbath, and of the week-day. With not a little parade of intellectual accessory, and apparent belief in its own infallibility, the priesthood of physical science, often delivers itself of some such objection as the following: "*Is it primâ facie probable that God will alter the universal mechanism of nature just to please me, or out of compliment to my insignificant prayer?*" Now such questions are unscientific to begin with, for a reply in the negative is the grossest form of fatalism; which is the very Egyptian midnight of unintellectual ignorance, a darkness which can be felt, and is found only at the very antipodes of science, light, and civilization. And, moreover, a prior question to the one propounded, is logically necessary; it is this—*When God designed the worlds, was prayer in the Creator's secret purpose included, or not, amongst the laws which were to govern those worlds of created intelligences?* Where can any reply be found but within the temple of Revelation, of the

Word of God? By no possible powers of induction can such a secret of the Creator be reached. If God has not revealed it, we may guess and argue, but the matter will remain unsettled. What saith the Lord? From Genesis to Revelation, the Bible reveals the truth of our text, as the very foundation of reconciled relationship of the dependent creature with the Fatherly Creator, and as the foundation rock upon which may be built our eternal superstructures of trust and joy. Genesis almost opens with the sublime utterance, "Let Us make *Man*, in Our image, after Our likeness." Man is made to be the most perfect of all creatures, which do, or ever can, respond to the love of God, because in Christ the most richly endowed of all; consequently, it is man, with his manifold parts, who will most glorify God in the exercise of the correlative systems of prayer-hearing and prayer-uttering. The model men of history were famed correspondingly to their skill, prevalence, and belief in the power of prayer. Noah, the representative of antediluvian piety "walked with God," that means talked with God. Abraham, the centre of the patriarchal dispensation was called "the friend of God," and tested the friendship prayerfully in those rising pleas for the salvation of the Cities of the plain in which Lot dwelt. Moses, the Apostle of Law, proved that law and liturgy meet together, and providence and prayer kiss each other in Christ; David, the representative of kingly rule, gives us his creed herein in his psalms, of which our text may well form the central jewel. Elijah, the delegate from the prophets, stands forth on Carmel, and derives his very patent of nobility from his power with God to apparently alter the course of physical nature. Jesus, the centre of the whole creation of God, and the model Man, prayed as man never prayed, or can pray. His power to pray, as "the man Christ Jesus" our Exemplar, and as the "One Mediator between God and man," forms the characteristic of the Christ. We read of His climbing to the tops of mountains —continuing "whole nights" in prayer; and once, while thus engaged, He illustrated the deepest fact of spiritual science, namely, that by the very exercise of this eternal law of our being it is, that, "as we pray," the "fashion" of our inner and outer nature is being "transfigured." The canon of Holy Scripture itself literally closes with the one great organic prayer of the Church militant, in all time, "Even so come, Lord Jesus."

What then, does all this prove as to the essence of true religion? That, in religion, not Reason, but Faith, is, and must be, the royal mistress. Reason is, at her best, but the obedient handmaid; Reason usurps when venturing to command Faith, but shines forth gloriously when obedient to her divine mistress. "Earthly beings have to be known to be loved, God must be loved to be known." Faith believes God; and, taking Him at His word, in the Bible, simply acts upon the covenant trust that "God is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." What more rational than for ignorance to believe Omniscience, weakness to lean on Omnipotence, a sinner to follow a Saviour, and for a poor, erring, heart-crushed, but penitent son to arise, and go to his Father, and *pray*?

"Abba!" is the birth-cry of the new creation. How can such a Father and such a son be once more together, in the same eternal House not made with hands, and not converse?—and converse with God is called Prayer. Surely, surely, this is a "reasonable service," and both the glory and wisdom of a rational immortal child of God!

What is prayer in relation to true religion?

It is nothing which comes out of the unrenewed heart of man however "earnest" the man, or the petitions; yea, though they cut themselves with lancets till the blood gushes out, and leap upon the altars of their superstition crying "Oh! Baal hear us, from morning until noon." But it is the responsive voice of a child, into whose heart have penetrated in the Holy Spirit the voiceless tones of "Our Father, which art in heaven" "We love Him because He first loved us;" and, rationally express our love, in Liturgy, Eucharist, intercession, and prayer. With the true Christian, prayer is the "vital breath" so that it is called "praying without ceasing." Brethren are we mere sayers of prayer and actors of praise, or is our praying life-deep, and our life one living service of lauds? Do the arrows of our petitions reach the skies, or fall to earth again, witnesses to a slack bow of faith: do the ships-of-desire carry across the seas of separation freights of specific prayers for ourselves, our dear ones, and the Church of Christ; and return —not unwaited for with long patience and longings ineffable— deeply-laden with blessings and promises fulfilled, in things temporal and things eternal, from Him to whom we have meekly said, "O, Thou that hearest prayer!"

WHAT IS PRAYER?

"Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Uttered, or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

Prayer is the burthen of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of the eye;
When none but God is near.

Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try;
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The Majesty on high.

Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice
Returning from his ways,
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry 'Behold he prays!'

Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air;
His watchword at the gates of death;
He enters heaven with prayer.

Nor prayer is made by man alone;
The Holy Spirit pleads.
And Jesus, on the Eternal Throne,
For mourners intercedes.

O! Thou, by Whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way!
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord! teach us how to pray!"

Amen.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN

[No. 51.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

VERY REV. DEAN OF ST. PAUL'S,

(R. W. CHURCH, M.A.)

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF ST. LAWRENCE, JEWRY,

ON SUNDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 6, 1872.

(At the Harvest Festival.)

"*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*" —Genesis viii, 22.

This was God's first promise to a pardoned and restored world; and yearly, at this time, the world is reminded of the wonderful and regular fulfilment of it, on which our mortal and temporal state here depends. If for this reason only, that it recalls this great promise, harvest-time always seems to me a most solemn time of the year. It is generally a time of fair weather and always a time of busy and absorbing work, but this does not make it the less solemn, or the less full of deep, and awful, and momentous thoughts—thoughts of the next world, thoughts that have upon them the shadow of what we call death, and of things that are after death. It is not in the day of cloud and storm; it is not in the short and gloomy days of winter, but in the heat of summer days when the corn is turning yellow; in the fine, glowing, autumn evenings when the sheaves stand in the fields and the heavy-laden waggons reel along the roads; it is then that the most solemn lesson of the year is preached to us. It is not either when the harvest is less successful than usual that its voice speaks with deeper warning about God. Whether it has failed or not, whether it has brought plenty and the promise of an easy year to come, or has brought disappointment and failure, and all those anxious thoughts which come with a deficient harvest, its great and impressive significance is the same.

The harvest carries us back to the oldest days of the world and to the men who lived in the time of the patriarchs. Many changes have come over the world, and men are very different now from what they were in those olden times, but one thing never changes; men still sow and reap, and gather in the harvest, as they did in the days of Noah; as they did in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; as they did when Boaz went out among his reapers; and Ruth gleaned in the fields; as they did in the days when our Lord Jesus lifted up His eyes and saw the fields white with the harvest, so, exactly they do now. Still we lay out the year as they did; still we depend upon what the year brings forth as they did; still we plough, we sow, we reap, we bind the sheaves and gather them together, we thrash the ears, and we grind the corn as they did. And this goes on the same all over the world, and it has gone on the same through all generations of men. Look at the reapers reaping the corn at harvest-time, and you see here in England just what Abraham and David looked upon in Canaan. Here in our vast metropolis when we look at our great manufactories and warehouses, our curious machinery, our intricate arrangements of every kind in those storehouses which bring together all that men have invented with their utmost skill all over the world—when we look at this we seem to be a different race of beings, and to live in a different world from those simple men whom we read of in the Bible. But go from the railroad or the workshop to the harvest-field and there you may fancy yourself in the old days again, when men walked with God, and angels visited the earth, and realize the fact that you are of the same race, the same flesh and blood, and feeling as the men of the Bible; you look on the self-same work that was followed by them, and you feel the same hopes, and fears, and interests which they did. The harvest binds us all together —the Old world and the New—it makes us feel that after all we live the same life at bottom, and depend on the same bounty of God to sustain us; it teaches that with all our wonderful discoveries in science and art, and with all our mastery over nature we have found nothing, and never shall find anything, to take the place of the wheatsheaf and the ears of corn that gladdened the eyes and sustained the hearts of those men, who, so many ages ago tilled the fields, and watched their flocks, and first sang the Psalms in a language that we cannot understand, in that ancient Holy Land which is so far away. The harvest then brings with it solemn thoughts of those days of old, of which we read in the Bible, of times before the Bible was yet written, and even before the things were being done which were to be written in it.

Another thing which makes the harvest a solemn time is that it reminds us of what our earthly life depends upon. In the year is grown the year's food only—the year's food for all the earth, and on it we and all human creatures depend for our existence. It is the chief time when men's food is given to them; they cannot make it; they cannot force it; it comes straight from the hand—the all-creating power of God. The corn which has been gathered in these last few weeks did not exist in the world six months ago; all the wealth of the world could not have purchased it; all the power of the world could not have made it come up before its time. It is something which God by His goodness and power has caused, this very summer now passed, to be new upon the earth; not without our work, not without our care, and toil, and skill; but when all is done that we can do, then He speaks the word and commands the seed which we have sown to grow and ripen, and only He could do it. And when it is done we feel, if we believe in God at all, that God's power has been near to us, in all its truth, and glory, and goodness, and has really given to us that which we could not otherwise have had. And without it where would we have been? If God were to withhold His power, and all over the world for only one year, the harvest, which man cannot create or command, should not yield its fruit, just think of the consequences—for though we can store up money, and materials for our buildings, our ships, our engines, our luxuries, man's food is not a thing of which we can store up as much as we please. It does indeed come to us so regularly that we forget this, but it is not the less true for all that, that the world each year literally depends for its subsistence on something which is newly given it, and which it cannot provide for itself. Harvest is indeed the time of the opening of God's gracious hand to mankind, without which they could not live—an opening which though it goes on all through the year is yet most signally displayed at the gathering in of the corn. Therefore, I say, it seems to me always a very solemn time, because the God of goodness and love, who made us and who keeps us through our lives, seems then to come and to deal with us directly, seems actually to give us from Himself, what, if we had it not from Him, we could not get anywhere else, and for want of which we must perish. It is then that we see the food of the world coming from the hand of Him who made the world and Who is alone able to feed the sheep of His pasture.

But it has another solemn thing about it, it suggests a time of trial and of reckoning. Here, as in other things, our God calls us to be fellow-workers with Him, to work as He works, to bear our share of the responsibility for the issue of success or failure. If we have not sown neither shall we reap. If we have sown carelessly or sown bad seed, we shall reap accordingly. When the harvest time has once come there is no opportunity for mending, or for altering. There was a time when things might have been corrected and put straight, a time at the beginning of the year when pains might have been of use to make up for lost time, or at any rate to provide some remedy, but if that time was lost, if that favourable moment was let slip, when the harvest time comes there is no recovering it. The field will then show the farming it has had. No after-patching or mending will keep it from betraying the proofs of neglect. It is a time for giving decision and judgment which the power of man cannot alter and from which there is no escaping, for it is God Himself who passes sentence. When we pass by a bad field, with foul patches in harvest time, we know its history; we know the cause of it at once; and we know also that as it stands so must the reapers reap; foul it has grown, and foul it must be gathered in. And then, too, come back into our thoughts all those parables in which Christ the Lord used on the harvest time—used it perhaps at the very time itself—as the image and likeness of the judgment of the world by our God. The harvest is the end and upshot of the year, the time for which all the rest of the year is a preparation; the time for which all other things are done, and which finally shows how they have been performed. Then what awful things it is like. "The field" says our Lord, interpreting His parable, "the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels." "I saw," says St. John in the Revelations—in a passage which you have heard to night, and to which I would have you listen once more—"I saw a white cloud, and upon the cloud, one sat like unto the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped." When you see the reapers at work in the harvest time, can you help thinking of those other awful reapers of whom the Lord and His Apostles have told us? It seems almost as if the parable of the world's judgment was being acted before our eyes. It is indeed a wonderful time, a touching time, a time of display of the creative power of God, which, if we were not so much used to it, might make us as much astonished as if we saw an actual miracle. He leaves Himself not without witnesses in that He does good, and gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons filling our hearts with joy and gladness. We see how in old times men's hearts were lifted up in praise and rejoicing at the sight of the wonderful return of the harvest. "Thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice. Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: Thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water:

Thou preparest them corn, when Thou hast so provided for it. Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: Thou settlest the furrows thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers: Thou blessest the springing thereof." Thus did the harvest make the singer of old time break out; and the harvest, my brethren, is as much to us as it was to them. We cannot do without it. Though we are grown so wise, and great, and strong, we have not found out anything to take the place of the harvest; still, as of old, we depend upon God for our daily bread; still we must look up to Him "who causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man; that He may bring forth food out of the earth, and wine that gladdens the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart."

Let us then not be behind our fathers in recognizing the tokens of God's power and love. If we are indeed so much wiser, and know so much more than they did, let us show our wisdom by our greater seriousness, by our deeper earnestness, by our thankfulness. Let us not allow such a time as this to pass without its natural influences coming home, and sinking deeply into, and drawing our hearts up to the God of our life, who sends us His blessing here, to persuade us of His love and blessing in the world unseen. Now is your sowing time against the great harvest which shall be of all men, and of all their works unto the end of the world. Sow not now to yourselves unthankfulness, carelessness, insensibility of heart. Sow not the unblessed seed of selfishness and forgetfulness of God's benefits, and of a soul dead to the wants and sufferings of others. Sow not the wind of sin and vanity, for they that thus sow shall reap the whirlwind. But so take this present time of blessing that you may always think of it as of a time when you remembered God and honoured Him by making use of it to rejoice in Him, to thank Him, to serve Him better, to have a deeper sense of His greatness and His goodness. So use it, that if times of trouble come to you, you may not have the bitter reflection and remorse of having madly abused the time of prosperity. So use and enjoy it, that it shall be not only a pledge and token of God's goodness to you, but also a sure pledge and token of His certain reckoning with you—the pledge and token that the life you are leading now must bring forth its natural, its necessary and inevitable consequences, as certainly as the seed sown in the fields produces the harvest. God who keeps His promise in the seedtime and the harvest, will keep it in yet greater things. He will keep it in things eternal, who keeps it so surely in the things of time. "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth, it shall not return unto Me void; but it shall accomplish that which I please, and shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it."

CONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. RICHARD GLOVER, M.A.,

Vicar of St. Luke's, West Holloway.

PREACHED IN CHRIST CHURCH, MAIDA HILL.

"*For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.*"—St. Matthew vi, 14, 15.

In selecting this passage of Scripture for our meditation, I wish to direct your special attention to it, as one that is commonly used, and yet almost as commonly misunderstood and misapplied. It is really surprising how frequently this is the case with some of the most familiar texts of God's Word. A certain fitness of the words of a text to the subject in hand, is deemed enough to warrant its application to it, whereas when regard is paid to the meaning which was in the inspired speaker or writer's mind, it really has no bearing at all upon it; or sometimes teaches the very opposite doctrine to that which it is quoted to support. And thus great dishonour is done to truth, apparently on the warrant of Scripture itself—hopeless confusion and contradiction are introduced into its teachings—and often irreparable injury is inflicted upon the souls of men.

Now I would here state at the outset, two or three leading rules of interpretation, that will be found in all such cases to have been overlooked; and by means of which, we ourselves shall be able to detect the misinterpretation of any particular text. The first I would mention is *the usage of language.* Even ordinary books often use peculiar terms in a peculiar manner, and in a sense peculiar to themselves—and if we overlook this particular sense attached to the words that the author employs, we shall of course go utterly adrift as to his meaning.

The particular sense can always be ascertained if we take pains to study parallel passages or other places where the word is used, but if we neglect this, we shall most likely understand the term in a totally different sense to that in which it is used by the author. And this is especially important when the book is an inspired one. I cannot pause to apply or illustrate these rules now. I must content myself with simply mentioning them.

Another rule is—*the sense of the passage in the light of the context.*

By far the greatest number of errors of interpretation arise from the neglect of this rule. People take up a text entirely by itself, altogether overlook the connexion in which it stands; and the scope and design of the whole passage; and thus not only miss its true meaning, but give it a totally opposite one to that which it was intended to bear. Take for instance—for here I should like to give one example—such a commonly quoted text as "We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous, &c." How constantly is that quoted as though it taught that all men have such an advocate, at God's right hand, and as though the "we" were as wide as humanity. Whereas if the context were referred to, it would show, that the Apostle was speaking only of God's true believing people, and that it is only they who enjoy this blessed privilege. Then, again, there must be mentioned one other great cause of such serious mistakes, and that is *neglect of what is called the analogy of faith.*

By which I mean that general teaching of Holy Scripture which should govern and qualify all isolated and separate texts. Sometimes we meet with a text that seems to teach directly the opposite to what is taught in other Scriptures; but if we do, we must correct the strange and difficult texts by the plainer and more numerous ones that speak on the same subject. And if we persist in forcing a meaning into it that is contradicted by the general doctrine of Holy Scripture, we may rest assured that our interpretation is wrong.

But having mentioned these rules, so often neglected, we pass on to consider, this important passage before us, and we shall see how the observation of them enables us to detect the false construction, and to discern the true.

I. And first, let us state and expose the common mistakes which it is quoted to support. These solemn words of our Lord Himself, then, are constantly quoted to show that the way to get our sins forgiven, is to forgive our fellow-men. That this, in fact, is the condition on which God offers forgiveness to mankind. If they will comply with this condition, and overlook the sins of their fellow-creatures against them, then God will regard that as a set off for all their sins against Him, and bestow on them His pardon. For it is said—are not these our Saviour's own words—"If ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you." So that according to all this, the price at which God sells His pardon to the human race is the price of their forgiveness. This is all He requires, but this much He does require in order to be reconciled to us—that we be reconciled to our fellows. Let us only be kindly disposed to those who have offended us, and we may be sure that whatever our sins against God may have been, God will be kindly disposed towards us. He will blot out all our transgressions, and we shall enjoy His favour and reconciliation. Yes, let us not doubt this, for, it is repeated, "Does not our Saviour Himself, say so?" Yes, we reply, He certainly does say these words "For if ye forgive men their trespasses your heavenly Father will also forgive you." But then, first of all, let us look at the context, and see who He was speaking to, and the kind of forgiveness He was speaking about.

And thus we detect the mistake and misapplication of the passage at once. For we find that He is not here speaking to the world, or to the wicked, or to sinners in their sins at all. But He is speaking to His own disciples, to those who had already sought forgiveness at God's hand, and had obtained it: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour" (Ephesians v, 1, 2). These disciples to whom He was speaking had repented of their sins at the preaching of the Baptist, had believed on Jesus as the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world, and so had been accepted in the Beloved, and had become His brethren, and God's forgiven and accepted children. So that the passage cannot be quoted as pointing out the way in which unconverted sinners may obtain God's forgiveness. To find out how they may obtain this, or on what terms or conditions, if any, God promises to forgive them, we must manifestly look elsewhere, for this passage is not dealing with their case at all. The context shows that Christ is speaking only to His disciples—to those to whom He had just given the children's prayer—and whom He had taught to approach unto God in the spirit of adoption, under a sense of reconciliation, saying, "Our Father which art in heaven."

We see then from this, further, that the context helps us to decide the usage of the language here. It qualifies the meaning of the terms employed. It determines that the words "you," and "forgive," and "trespasses," must have here a different sense to what they have, when the sins of ordinary men are spoken of; that, here, the "trespasses" are trespasses committed by pardoned believers, and that the "forgiveness" is a remission of the penalty of such faults, a forgiveness subsequent to their great pardon. And, therefore, the "if" relates only to the condition on which such trespasses are forgiven. It has no reference at all to the conditions on which God grants forgiveness to other sinners, it has respect only to the faults and forgiveness of His own children: we detect this mistake by the application of our third rule, namely, *by the analogy of faith.*

The question is, Do other Scriptures tell us anything about the way in which sinners must obtain forgiveness and reconciliation with God? Is any other light thrown on the mode by which God offers pardon to mankind generally, and upon the terms on which He offers to forgive sins? The answer is, that other passages abound on this subject; the Gospel both as foreshadowed in the Old Testament, and more clearly revealed in the New, is, in fact, full of it, and is chiefly concerned with this subject; and if we want to see the terms on which God offers forgiveness to sinners unreconciled to Him, let us turn to such passages where such sinners are addressed. Hearken to St. Peter, for instance, where he addresses such on the day of Pentecost, "Men and brethren," said they under conviction of sin, "what shall we do?" How shall we get our sins forgiven? What shall we do to obtain reconciliation with God? And what is the distinct answer? "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Hearken again to St. Paul when he addresses the guilty Philippian jailor, "What shall I do to be saved?" was the anxious question asked; and this was the answer—not "Forgive others and God will forgive you," but "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And every part of the Gospel is in harmony with this, that such sinners are offered free and full forgiveness, without any conditions of performances on their part, for the sake of what Jesus has done and suffered. As sinners they can perform no atoning condition themselves, even if it were required. But it is not. Christ has atoned for their sins, He has paid the price of their ransom; and now the offer is made to them to be "justified by His blood freely." All that these anxious sinners have to do is to put their trust in what Jesus Christ has done and suffered on their behalf, and thus "through Him" is preached the forgiveness of sins. No truth is clearer all through the Gospel than this, and yet here is a passage that seems to teach that it is through ourselves that we obtain forgiveness; that God offers us pardon, on condition of one of our own acts and performances, namely, the forgiving our fellows. What must I conclude then? Must I qualify God's Gospel offers, and say to the sinner, "You must believe in Christ, but your faith in a Saviour is not quite enough in itself; God will not remit your sins until you have complied with a certain condition. But only do this; forgive all who have wronged you and then do not doubt that God will forgive you?" No, I must not preach such a hesitating Gospel as this, nor fetter God's free proclamation of mercy, and in this way spoil God's glad tidings, but I must conclude that I have misconstrued the latter passage altogether, because it is manifestly out of harmony with all the Gospel. And thus again I arrive at what the context and the usage of language have already taught me, that the Saviour is here speaking, not of the forgiveness of unreconciled sinners at all, but of the forgiveness of the subsequent faults of His pardoned and adopted family.

II. And now, brethren, we have arrived at what this difficult passage does mean. Christ is here speaking then—not of the dealings of God as the moral Governor of the world, or of the terms on which He offers forgiveness to rebel sinners who are outside the bond of the covenant; but He is speaking of His dealings as the Father of His own family. The question is, How will He discipline and train His own children? On what terms will He govern them? He does not expect that even they will be absolutely perfect. They will be frequently guilty of slips and falls, even after they are pardoned and accepted. They will often fall out by the way, and have quarrels among themselves. But how shall God deal with such faults? Shall

He altogether wink at them and allow them; shall sin not be sin because committed by His own children? Will He chastise even the faults of His own children? Or if He forgive them, what are the conditions? Now the Saviour is here laying down the truth that God is a merciful and forgiving Father, as regards the faults of His adopted children. But that there is one thing that He must insist upon, and that is, that they shew amongst themselves a similar spirit to that which He shews towards them. He wants to make His children like Himself, kind, and loving, and gracious towards offenders. If He is forgiving, they must be forgiving. If He is willing to pardon the faults of His children, they must be willing to pardon the faults of their brethren. And if they will not, then He will punish even His own children. He will teach them better than to cherish such feelings. Such of them shall certainly have their offences chastised, "If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." And now having pointed out the mistakes that are made concerning this passage and also the solemn truth that it was intended to teach, let me in a few words apply the lessons we have been taught.

And first, a word to those who are not God's children, in the sense of our text, to those whose sins are not forgiven, and who are not yet in a state of reconciliation with Him. Let me suppose that they are anxious to be forgiven; and that they are really asking how they can obtain this priceless blessing. What must they first do? I have to say, Do nothing; simply receive. But are there no conditions for me to perform first? None whatever. It is the glory of God and the glory of His Gospel, that they offer you a free and full pardon, unfettered by any conditions whatever. The terms to any penitent are, "only believe," and faith is not a condition of salvation but simply the instrument of laying hold of it. You have only to accept God's gracious offers, believing that He means what He says, and to receive His proffered mercy, which He declares to be as wide in its embrace as "the east is from the west," and there is then salvation for you full and free. As a righteous and sin-hating God, He cannot indeed pardon your sins without an atonement, but that *you* have not to render; it has been rendered. Christ hath met and fulfilled every condition of your pardon, and for His sake the pardon is offered you freely. This is God's Gospel to you, God's glad tidings, so that you have only to come to-day believing in this offer, relying on the satisfaction which Christ has offered, and all your sins shall be blotted out. We have to say to you "all things are ready;" if your faith is ready "Come unto the marriage" and eat as the guest of God. The only question is "Wilt thou be made whole?" Lamenting thy sin and guilt, dost thou want to be reconciled to God? If so, you need not wait to do a single thing, come only to Christ, and He will say to thee, as He did to those penitents who came to Him on earth "Thy sins be forgiven thee, go in peace"—peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord. For said He not, even to the leper, "I will, be thou clean, and immediately his leprosy was cleansed." But to those who have done thus and got this pardon, I have to say, *you still need pardon of another kind*. Though God has brought you into His family as His pardoned child, you are not a perfect child. Willing as the spirit may be, the flesh is weak, and you are constantly committing trespasses. You are frequently grieving your Father, and you are constantly committing offences that need His forgiveness. And most willing is He to extend it, when confessing your offences you desire it. He is gracious and merciful to His offending children, and through the propitiation for our sins, He is ready to forgive them seventy times seven. But here His Son tells you that as your Father, He will not give it if you are unforgiving towards your brethren. And what good father would forgive a child, who was harsh and unforgiving towards his brothers and sisters? And if you are harsh and unforgiving, God will whip such a spirit out of you.

He will not, indeed, destroy your soul, or cast you out of the bond of the covenant, but He will destroy your peace and happiness and visit your offences with the rod, and your sin with scourges, and in His Fatherly discipline *He will deal with you as you deal with others,* hiding from you His favour and His reconciled countenance, until He brings you back to a better mind, and makes you more worthy to be called the child of your Father which is in heaven.

Church Sermons

BY
EMINENT
CLERGYMEN

[No. 52.

CONTAINING TWO SERMONS.

A Sermon

BY THE

REV. PROFESSOR JOWETT, M.A.,

Master of Balliol College, Oxford.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

"*When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?*"—Luke xviii, 8.

In many ages of the Christian Church men have entertained an expectation that Christ was shortly about to re-appear on the earth. And some of the words of our Lord Himself seem to favour the expectation, as for example His saying "There be some standing here, who shall not taste of death till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power;" or, "This generation shall not pass away until all these things are fulfilled," while in other passages He refuses to speak of the "times and the seasons which the Father hath put in His own power." From a verse in the 1st Epistle to the Thessalonians, "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air," we gather that St. Paul had a similar belief, although at a later period, he desired rather to "depart and be with Christ." And in the first century of the Christian era the same expectation was widely spread, some affirming that Christ would reign for a thousand years: others again imagining that His re-appearance was delayed a little while; others were saying as we might do, "Where is the promise of His coming? for since the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning."

In times of religious excitement or under the pressure of great and overwhelming calamities, the belief in the Second coming of Christ has tended to revive, and many have fancied that they saw the sign of the Son of Man coming in the clouds. Such a belief prevailed in one of the most miserable periods of human history, the beginning of the Tenth century, when, as the great Catholic historian, writing of that time says, " Christ was still in the ship, but asleep." For there have been cruel days in the history of the world; far worse formerly than any which occur now, worse even than those which we have witnessed during the last year or two, because more enduring and hopeless. These naturally led men to say, " O Lord, how long ?" And even in our own times, we have known persons or societies among whom the shadow of the ancient belief still survived, who from some peculiarity of character, and on some ground, probably derived from Scripture, such as the mention of 1260 years in the Book of Revelation, have fixed a certain year or day at which the great change was to occur. But they one by one have dropped off and gone to their rest; their opinions have passed away with them. They have learned that " not here, not here, or to mortal eye, was the vision of Christ to be revealed."

This belief in Millenarianism was condemned as " a Jewish dotage " in one of the original articles of the Church of England, published by King Edward the VI. And although we may be thankful that the number of the Articles was reduced from Forty Two to Thirty Nine, yet we can hardly regard this opinion which was condemned by them, as perfectly allowable, or as wholly free from evil consequences. For when men have *fancies* about Religion, which however natural in the primitive Church, and in the age of the Apostles ought to have been refuted long ago by universal experience, they are apt to lose their hold on the main principles of Christian truth. The visions in which they indulge have an absorbing effect on their minds; they lead them into nonsense; they withdraw them from their fellow men. While they are looking into a vacant and distant heaven for a sign, the *real* signs of the times, which are everywhere around them, seem to escape them. For we see farthest into the Future—and that is not far—when we most carefully consider the facts of the Present.

And therefore I shall not attempt to explain what is the meaning of Christ's coming again: " Whether in the body or out of the body we cannot tell," nor shall I ask the question which was put to Christ by the mother of Zebedee's children, whether His saints and apostles shall reign with Him, sitting upon thrones and judging the kingdoms of the earth. These are questions which can never have an answer; we might as well argue about poetry or figures of speech. There is a deeper meaning in the words of Christ than can be realized by mere imagination, or by any effort of the painter's art.

First I shall consider what is the feeling with which this saying was uttered, "When the Son of Man cometh shall He find faith on the earth." Many persons may scarcely have noticed these words, or may not have attempted to reconcile them with their previous conception of the character of Christ.

Secondly: I shall enquire "If Jesus Christ were to come again upon earth," what judgment He would pass upon us and upon our lives, and how He would apply the precepts of the Gospel to modern society. That appears to be a natural way of bringing the words of Christ home to ourselves

And thirdly I shall ask, "What indications there are that the kingdom of heaven is come among us," or in other words, what reason we have for thinking that the condition of life and of mankind ever can or will be regenerated, whether by the change of external circumstances, or by the agency of moral or spiritual influences.

We easily imagine that Christ and His Apostles certainly foreknew the triumph of the Gospel; that they had no griefs or disappointments, no pain at the ingratitude or hardheartedness of mankind. But if this had been so they would not have been in all points "tempted like as we are." The preconception is natural, and yet is not supported by the words of Scripture. There, we see Christ like some great teacher of other days, like the prophet Elijah, for example, now accepted, now rejected of men, now seeming to feel a sort of inward triumph—"The hour is come that the Son of Man should be glorified," and yet experiencing at the last a depth of darkness and desolation to which no sorrow in this world can be compared—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me." He had come into the world to fulfil His Father's Will, to deliver men from evil, to re-unite them to God, to lay the foundations of a new and spiritual kingdom. And multitudes had believed on Him or seemed to believe on Him, but by degrees they had fallen away, after the chief priests had commanded that those who confessed Christ should be put out of the Synagogue. So St. Paul, walking in the footsteps of his Master, in his old age when his life of missionary labour was drawing to a close, utters the sorrowful words "Knowest thou that all they of Asia be turned away from me." And we cannot be wrong in supposing that at the end of our Lord's life the number of His followers was much fewer than a year or two previously; for we read in the Acts of the Apostles, that the first Christians' meeting in the large upper room at Jerusalem were not more than one hundred and twenty. The opposition had waxed hotter than at first; the suspicions of the government had been aroused. And many who were willing enough to receive the first impressions of the Gospel, in time of persecution fell away, for they had no depth of heart in their natures; and the new Sect which had arisen seemed to be on the point of being stamped out.

Can we imagine the feelings of some Prophet, or great religious Teacher when he finds the world turning against him, and he begins to understand the difficulty of telling men what is at variance with their old prejudices or traditions? He does not lose faith in the Truth, but he is inclined to despair of his fellow men. There are such enmities to be overcome, such misrepresentations to be cleared up, such a mass of obloquy to be undergone, and he without any power to stem the rising tide of ignorance and fanaticism, is but a feeble mortal who can trust only in himself and God. That is the feeling under which the prophet Elijah says: "It is enough, now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers." He has no personal ambition, but he feels the want of other men's sympathy, to whom he desires to do good, and they will not let him: and to whom he would preach the Truth of which his own mind is full, but they will not hear him. "How often would I have gathered thy children together, and ye would not come unto me that ye might have life." And, perhaps, he wonders whether, if he were to leave his own people or country, and come again to them, like the Athenian legislator, they would receive him; if the prejudice against him would have worn away, or if he would still be the object of hatred and persecution. And still loving his brethren, like St. Paul, and eager that they should be saved, he also knows that the difficulties and disappointments which have hitherto attended him, may be his portion to the end. He is not certain that his Gospel will ever triumph; but he is certain that it is the Truth; and he is willing that his own name should pass away, that there should be no reaction or compensation, if he can only be confident that he is doing the Will of God, and keeping that which is entrusted to him. As his mission to his fellow men appears to fail, he clings more and more to the thought of God. Somewhere, he cannot tell where, by some means he cannot tell what, he believes that the ways of God will be justified to man; of himself, or of his own reward he never thinks, all that is absorbed in his love for God. Nor even in the depth of his agony does he really fear that he can be cast out by God, though for a time he is walking in the shadow of death. There have been struggles in men's minds greater and more full of consequences to the world at large, than the battles of the earthly warrior. The capacities of the human soul are not exhausted by the shallow loves, or fears, or hopes, or enmities of ordinary men. There have been a few, who, following the example of our Lord, have thought of others only and not of themselves, of the Future as well as of the Present, and who have rejoiced and sorrowed, not at their own good or evil, but at the good and evil of their Church or their Country, yea and of the whole human race. We can hardly enter into their thoughts, for they are raised above us. They may have been religious teachers burning with a zeal for the salvation of mankind; or they may have been statesmen, doubtful perhaps about the Present, and careless of Party and personality, seeking to lay the foundation of a true national prosperity in the far distant future. There have been but a few such in any age, or in all ages of the world, but from them have been derived the greatest blessings to individuals and Churches and States. For in any class, and in any occupation to have shown a higher type of character, a larger sympathy, a stricter sense of duty, a deeper insight, is an inestimable benefit to mankind. Even good men are apt to follow the ways of their companions; they do as others do, and do not attempt to apply the words or example of Christ to the religious society in which they live;—a few, a very few, think for themselves. And these may often have trials of which the World has no experience; it is a stranger to their hopes and aspirations; it cannot understand that they should be depressed by the sins and sufferings of men around them. Still less can it understand that when all things are against them, and their hopes seem to be blasted, still failing, dying in the service of God, they should be able to trust Him in Whom they have believed.

Thus I have endeavoured to transfer in a figure the words of Christ to other men, that we may see in a glass imperfectly the nature of that struggle which was passing in His mind. The life of Christ in the Gospel seems to become sadder as we draw nearer to His death. This sadness is not caused by the prospect of lingering suffering; the ingratitude and hard-heartedness of men pierce sharper than that. But He is more and more *alone*, as He approaches the end of His work on earth. No one seems to understand Him; even His brethren and His Apostles constantly mistake the meaning of His words. And more and more, if I may use such an expression, He *retires* into Himself and God.

And now I shall proceed to ask the second question:

If Jesus Christ were to come again upon earth, how would He regard us who are called by His name, and the bodies of Christians who acknowledge Him to be their Founder? Would He belong to any of them, or would He have something to say to all of them in common? We know that the founder of a Religion is not like the teachers of it in after ages He is not bound by convention and tradition, and he has a high and different standard. He tells us the truths which we least wish to hear, and pierces the mask or garment of self-satisfaction in which we cover ourselves. For although we do not exactly praise ourselves individually, yet we are always forming ideals of our Church our Nation, our form of worship—perhaps even of our church polity, which we fancy to accord with the primitive model, and we love to dwell upon their excellencies and overlook their defects. But to the mind of Christ all these things are of secondary importance—they are for the most part means towards ends and not the only means—in comparison with the one question, "Are men becoming better? —That is the shortest, the simplest, and most vital question, which any man can ask about himself, or about his Church, about the Society in which he lives, or about the Country of which he is a citizen.

An illustrious man not now living, is reported to have said: "If Jesus Christ were to come again upon earth, I have often thought that He would be written down." He could not approve of many things in our modern world, and therefore the world would probably be at enmity with Him. When He heard of our religious parties "calling down fire from heaven on each other," must He not have said to them "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." And when He saw that these religious divisions extended to the education of the young, may we not imagine Him to have taken a little child, and set him in the midst, and asked whether we meant to make this child the victim of a religious dispute. When He was told of another who belonged to a different persuasion unlicensed by any regular authority going about doing good, would He have said "Forbid him?" Might He not have been heard repeating to those who insisted that they would literally eat His flesh and drink His blood, "It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Or to those who make casuistical distinctions about the meaning of words, or draw remote inferences from them, would He not have said "Let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay;" or perhaps, "ye make void the word of God by your traditions." Or to those who exaggerate the importance of days, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." For we can hardly suppose that He who came to destroy Judæism would have allowed Jewish errors to remain among Christians. Or when he saw the value set on times and places, and the pomp of outward ceremonial, would He not have said "The hour is coming and now is, when neither in Jerusalem, nor in this mountain, men shall worship the Father;" and "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth?" Or to a rich and luxurious age, would He have abstained out of delicacy, or any fear of misunderstanding, from repeating the Parable of Lazarus and Dives? For the words of Christ necessarily go beyond the established ideas of

Religion, or the forms of polite society; they pierce like a sword into all things. And yet while they go so far beyond the received religious opinions of Christians in some respects, there are others in which they may seem to fall short of them.

He would have taught the new commandment, which is also old,—purity of thought as well as of word and act; the not doing things that we may be seen of men, or laying up for ourselves treasure upon earth; the seeking first the Kingdom of God; the forgiveness of injuries; the love of enemies,—that we may be the children of our Father which is in Heaven. What! only the Sermon on the Mount; and we verily thought that He would have spoken to us of Apostolical Succession, of "Real Presence," of Baptismal Regeneration, of Justification by Faith, of final assurance of satisfaction and atonement; or that He would have told us, not, that the Father came out and kissed the prodigal son, and fell upon his neck and wept, but that there was one way, and one way only, by which men could be restored to the favour of God; or that He would have wrought a miracle in the face of all men and put an end to the controversy about them; but He only says "There shall be no sign given to this generation." Or that He would have told us plainly when we asked Him about another life; but He only replies, "In the Resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage."

We thought that we should have been confirmed in those points of faith, or practice in which we differ from others and that they would have been condemned by Him; that we should have heard from His lips precise statements of doctrines; that He would have decided authoritatively disputed points, saying, "Thus and thus shall he think who would be saved." But He puts us off with "parables about little children, about the wheat and the tares growing together, about the new wine and the old bottles, about the wayward children sitting in the market-place, about a house divided against itself." Instead of answering our question, He asks others which we cannot answer. The language of theology seems never to fall from His lips, but only "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, and thy neighbour as thyself," and "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." He goes back to the first principles of truth and right; He speaks as one having authority, out of the fulness of His nature, and not like any preacher whom we ever heard. And still when we listen to His words, the conviction is forced upon us, "Truly this was the Son of God."

And when rulers or statesmen try to draw Him to one side or another, making Him utter their Shibboleths of order or of freedom, He replies to them, "My kingdom is not of this world." He does not ask under what form of Government men are living—though this is very far from being unimportant—but He desires to infuse a spirit into all governments. In any of them, and under any outward circumstances men may be His servants, and His Gospel contains principles wide enough to include them all. He will not take part with one class of society against another. His answer to the Galileans or "Communists" of His own day is "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and yet "Blessed are the poor," and "Be not ye called Master." And when He is told of terrible deeds springing from the power of some fatal Idea, and followed by revenge yet more terrible, do we not seem to hear Him saying, "Think ye that these fanatics were sinners above all the men of that city." For that is a thought which the Gospel allows us to hold in reserve about the political criminal, whom the laws of society cannot suffer to live. And when hatred is rife among men, and dead bodies are lying in the streets, and the air is full of rumours and terrors, then is the time not to enlist our sympathies with either party, but to think of Christ weeping over Jerusalem, pitying them all alike.

I have been endeavouring to describe Christ as we may imagine Him beginning to preach the Gospel over again, not to one class only, but to all of us in a Christian country. And I think you will admit that I have not unfairly applied some words of the Gospel to our own times. There seems to be a very great discrepancy between the Religion of Christ and the actual Church of Christ, between the lives and even the teaching of Christians, and the example and teaching of Christ, to which, as to a fountain of light we repair, purging away the mists of eighteen centuries, which have insensibly gathered over the Christian world, yea, and over our own hearts also.

And now I will briefly consider the latter words of the text, "Shall He find faith upon the earth," or in other words "What prospect is there of any great moral or religious improvement among mankind." We do not expect to see the sign of the Cross in the heaven, such as is said to have struck on the eyes of the wondering Emperor, nor are we prophets, or interpreters of prophecy. But there are indications in our own, as in other times, if we will read them, of some better state of the world which may be reserved for our children or descendants; some hope of the Future, which may animate this Country and other Countries, in spite also of appearances to the contrary.

For we do not suppose that the condition of the Poor is always to continue among us as at present; or deny that the blessings of education, and health, and comfort may be equally diffused among all. Can we doubt that such a state of Society would be more truly Christian and more acceptable in the sight of God, than that in which we live. The treasures of the earth have been unlocked, and wealth has increased among us, but we seem not as yet to have discovered the art of making the increase wealth go hand in hand with moral improvement. Free Trade has won a great victory during the last thirty years, Education has followed after with halting and lingering steps, yet it has followed. And some of us may fear that a great opportunity has been lost, and that the blessing of material prosperity has been partly turned into a curse. But the opportunity which has been partly lost may recur, the fruits of labour may still increase and multiply, and we may make a better use of them. The England of a hundred years hence may wear another and a smiling face —may, perhaps, show that an old country has the blessings of a new. There is no law of nature, or of political economy which forbids this; the experience of some other countries encourages us in the hope of it. And the Gospel will not allow us to entertain the fatal doctrine that Nations, like individuals, tend necessarily to decay; or that of human evils there is not a great part which Kings, or Statesmen may cause or cure.

Then again, as to our religious divisions. Are they not regarded differently now from what they formerly were; are they not, in some instances becoming ridiculous? I do not mean to say that there is any likelihood of the different Churches or Sects of Christendom being united in a single communion. Nor is such a union desirable; at least, unless all men could be included, the world would only be divided more and more into two camps irreconcilably hostile to one another. But I think we have reason to expect that the evils of religious division will be much diminished, that the members of different religious bodies will be more and more able to co-operate with one another in schools and universities in carrying on works of education and charity in whatsoever things are pure and lovely, and of good report; not that they will give up the principles for which their fathers struggled, or the forms of worship which they have inherited from them. The characters of individuals and nations differ, and these differences enter into their religious beliefs. When men read History they find often that their position is the result of some accident or misfortune of the Past; and this has a softening influence. And when they think of themselves and their brethren, as they are in the sight of God, they know that they are not really distinguished by the names which they bear in this world, but that in every nation and in every church he that doeth righteousness is accepted of Him.

Again, there seem to be signs that the opposition between Religion and Science, faith and knowledge of which we have heard so much, is fading away. For there is no real separation between truth and goodness, but for a time, and owing to some misunderstanding, they appear to part company. The novelties of Science like any other novelties, slowly find their way; the conjectures of science or criticism we are not called upon to accept until they are proven to us. Religious men are beginning to be aware that they must not deny any true facts of History or Science. Scientific men are becoming conscious that human Life cannot be reconstructed out of the negative results of criticism, or the dry bones of science. The first thoughts of persons often are: this is at variance with what I learned in childhood, with what I read in Scripture, with what I hear from the pulpit. Their second thoughts are, *that no truth can be at variance with any other truth,* and that they must wait patiently for the reconcilement of them.

These are a few of the signs of greater harmony prevailing in the world; and of the spirit of Christ being more diffused among men. They may lead some of us to think of a new epoch in the history of Christianity, bearing the same relation to the Christianity of the three last centuries, which the Reformation did to the ages which preceded. Whether this be too bold a speculation or not, we may be assured of this that there never will be a Millennium on earth until we make one. The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation, is not evidenced by signs in the heavens, or special providences vouchsafed to individuals, is not seen in the union of Churches, or in the declarations of Councils. The sun will rise as at any other time; the seasons will come and go; the generations of men will be born and die as in every other period of human history. The difference will not be in the external appearance of Nature, but in the renewal of the spirit of Man. Christ will appear to us not in the extraordinary, but in the common, in the dwellings of the poor, in the daily life of the family, in the integrity of trade, in the peace of nations. The increase of justice and truth, of knowledge and love, the diminution of suffering and disease, of ignorance and crime, the living for others and not for themselves, to do the Will of God more and more, and not their own will—these are the only real signs in individuals or in nations, that the Kingdom of God has come among them.

And if any one desire to take part in this work—to restore the Kingdom of God in a parish, a school, or a university, he must bear in himself that image which he is seeking to impress upon men. He who would teach others the lesson of reconciliation, must be free from personality himself; he who would instruct others must have knowledge; he who would support and guide them, must have force of character; he who has the words Science and Criticism on his lips must have the love of Truth in his heart. Young men often form ideals of the good which they will do to others; they seem to desire something higher than the state in which they live. And after a time the ideals fade away, and they become immersed in their ordinary occupation; they see another generation growing up with the same poetical visions and aspirations, and they prophecy the end of them, and perhaps laugh at them. Which is right? The foolishness of youth is sometimes better than the experience of age. The misfortune is that the visions have fled away, when a man has acquired the power and knowledge, which might in some degree have enabled himto carry them out. But if at thirty, at forty, at fifty, he could retain this first love of his youth; if he could limit his aspirations to what was really attainable; if he would study the means to ends; if he would throw aside all drawbacks and every weight—if he would live a little among the classes of whom he speaks, and learn from the failures of others; if, in short, from being speculative he were always in process of being practical—those early visions might be beginnings of a noble character; they might be a well-spring of everlasting life. To have felt thus even for a time is natural to every fine mind and to every higher intellect. He who is able to preserve these yearnings unchilled and unfaded amid the wear and tear of human things, and the temptations of the World, against the cynicism or epicurianism of the Age—against the not less deadening influence of custom; who is always growing in experience, and builds up success on failures and disappointments, who is single in his aims, and is unaffected by the opinions of men, and works, not for his own, but for the work's sake—will bring the Kingdom of God nearer to us, and show in a figure more striking than any words, how Christ did the Will of His Father while He was on earth.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED IN STRAFFAN CHURCH,

ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 1872.

"*And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.*"—St. Luke v, 5, 6.

In our study of the Gospels it is worthy of remark, that the miracles wrought by Christ were not merely manifestations of Almighty power, though that was certainly their first object. His control of the powers of nature proclaimed Him to be the Lord of Nature. He had done among men, works which none other man ever did, and those works were intended to bear witness of Him that He was in very deed the Christ, the Son of God. But at the same time we find that in all the miracles wrought by Christ there is some spiritual lesson involved, which probably is a point of difference between them and the miracles wrought by Prophets and Apostles. They have a still deeper purpose, making them wonders for all time, and not for those only who were their eye witnesses. They teach us like a parable. They are all suggestive of spiritual truth. They have each lessons peculiarly their own. When St. John sent disciples to ask. Was He the Christ? He told them to go back and tell him how that "the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and to the poor the Gospel is preached,"—the last words comprehending all the spiritual lessons which the miracles conveyed—showing how moral blindness is removed, the infirmity of an evil nature healed, the leprosy of sin cleansed, and the soul slumbering in the sleep of death is wakened to new life with Christ. So, also, when the few loaves in the wilderness were multiplied to feed thousands, they did more then appease the hunger of a starving multitude. They formed the text from which Christ preached Himself to eighteen centuries as the Bread of Life.

And when the miraculous draught rewarded the faith of St. Peter, it conveyed, as we shall see, lessons of deep moment, not to him only, but also to the Church of Christ ever since.

And here I may observe, how wonderfully we find different ends are attained by the words and works of God. Among men it is thought one of the great marks of a master mind to bear several useful objects in view at the same time, and to gain them all by the same course of action. In the works of God this everywhere is manifest. The air that we breathe, and the light that we see, sustain the life of thousands of creatures besides ourselves. And to each one of these creatures they are manifold in their uses. Every miracle Christ wrought, save one, (St. Matthew xxi, 19.) gave relief to suffering humanity, or did some good to man, as well as attested His heavenly mission, and the truths of His kingdom. Thus the one act attained many ends.

Again, how wonderful are the various lessons which a single brief passage of Scripture can teach. The more we consider even a single text of the Word of God, the more do its manifold truths begin to reveal themselves, and a hundred men may learn a hundred different lessons from the same few words.

The miraculous draught of fishes may be regarded in this light. It served a good many purposes, both immediate and remote, and the lessons which it teaches are manifold. To St. Peter in the first place it brought some trifling gain, though that was but the least of its results. Besides this it first brought conviction to his mind of the wisdom and power of Christ; furthermore, it persuaded him of his own unworthiness to dwell in the presence of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. And lastly, it was the beginning of his great call to a higher life, henceforth to become a fisher of men, enclosing multitudes of human souls in the vast draw-net of the Gospel.

A few words on the circumstances of the miracle will illustrate these points, before we consider its lessons to the Church. All through Galilee we learn that multitudes followed the steps of Christ; some came in hope of being healed of their diseases, even as to this day we see crowds thronging the door of some famed physician; some came from curiosity to see and hear one so greatly spoken of; some came from higher motives, to learn and to believe unto salvation. All these Christ addressed whenever opportunity afforded. In the villages He preached to them as they were gathered in the Synagogue on the Sabbath day; at other times He spoke as they followed Him to the open fields, along the public road, or as he crossed from place to place, through the wild mountains of Galilee. Wherever Jesus saw a multitude of immortal souls assembled, that was to Him a Church, and beneath the blue vault of heaven the words of Eternal Life were spoken. At this time they hemmed

Him in along the shore of Gennesaret, and stepping into one of the fishing boats that lay moored along its margin, He taught the people from the ship.

After this, perhaps long before the approach of evening, He desired Simon to row out to sea and let down the nets for a draught of fish. To the experienced fisherman this seemed unreasonable. "Master, we have toiled all night at our craft. Out in the gloom of night have we swept the dark waters, and have taken nothing; and now in the broad glare of daylight what hope of success is given. Now that the close meshes of the net can be clearly seen what chance is there of capturing our prey, when with all our skill in the murky depths of night we failed to entangle them. Yet Master to me Thy word is law, Thy slightest wish shall be obeyed. We will cast forth the net, even though the chance be small."

Such were the words of St. Peter to his Master, and reward followed his obedience. Hardly has the net swept the depths of the sea before it encloses so great a multitude of fishes that its meshes were beginning to yield to the unwonted strain, and they had to beckon to their partners in the other ship to aid them in securing their prey. Such was the wonder which the secluded lake of Gennesaret once beheld; and ever since its lessons have helped to sustain the life of the Church in its hours of deepest trial and apparently hopeless working.

How often do we measure the prospects of success by our own exertions. We toil and we labour, we found societies, we establish missions, we circulate the Scriptures, and we set on foot all the varied plans for drawing the ignorant, the ungodly, and the unbelieving, within the gracious net of the Gospel—that net which captures them not for their destruction, but their life; and yet with all our energy, all our zeal, disappointment seems to attend us. Among the wild waves we toil for many a dark hour like the fishermen of Galilee and like them take nothing, or nearly so; and when we draw the net to land, we can see but few of its captives of much value; the rest seem nearly worthless. Such often seems to be the prospect of the Church of Christ, when we regard it merely from a human point of view; when we look upon it as being built up, strengthened, and established more by our own exertions than by the word of Christ. Here we seem to gain, and there we seem to lose; and yet the profit may be but delusive, while the loss may be real gain; for it is "not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." In all things we require more faith in the power of God to bless our work, and to enable the means which we adopt to accomplish their end. It is not our preaching or our teaching that can convert one sinner from the error of his ways, or lead a soul to Christ It is the power of God attending the spoken word, and giving efficacy to the Gospel message. It is not even our own private reading of the Scriptures, or diligence in seeking the means of grace which can lead us to Christ, unless the Spirit of God illuminate our minds to behold the wondrous truths of His word and to bless those means of grace to our spiritual good. Thus often are we found toiling in many an hour of despondency and gloom, taking nothing, like the disciples at Gennesaret, for Christ is not with us.

And then when all hope seems vanished, when unfavourable times come on, and apparently untoward circumstances almost turn us to despair, as St. Peter despaired of success in the glare of noon, Christ bids us despair not; cast forth the net once more, and unlooked for success is the result. And so does the history of the Church ever seem to teach the same lesson as the circumstances of this miracle.

For many long dark centuries the few that represented the faithful Church of Christ toiled hopelessly. They wrought no deliverance in the earth. They saw the chains of superstition being wound yet tighter and tighter round the slaves. Here a little, and there a little light shone forth, but it soon was quenched, and the night after that seemed darker than before. At different times one or two earnest men were found to have the courage to speak forth, but their words of truth were stifled. And at last, when the bondage grew severest, when hope seemed very far away, God sent forth His servant, Luther, like St. Peter of old, as a fisher of men, to spread abroad the Gospel net, and great was the multitude it enclosed. Thus how strikingly do we see that the hour of apparent hopelessness is often chosen by God as the season of success, to remind us that it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but that all things are of Him, and that without Him we can do nothing.

And very often, too, do we find the same in our own lives. Who can say that his life has not, to some degree, disappointed him. The disciples when they put out to sea that night expected success, but morning brought them disappointment; they returned to shore having taken nothing. And how often do we find our early hopes still vanishing one by one, and the success we look for still receding from our view. The world may think differently. It sees a man eminent, prosperous, perhaps with no apparent trial or cause of grief, and it pronounces that man's life successful. While the only one who sees its failure is the man himself. He only knows his hours of bitterness, his conviction locked deep in his own breast, that take it for all in all, his life has been a disappointment.

And every one has the same tale to tell. The religious man, and the worldly man alike confess that their life has not come up to their expectations. The spiritual warfare, as well as the battle of life, is not one series of victories. It is often chequered by defeat. To none God ever gives complete success, either in work for Him, or in work for themselves. St. Paul and St. Peter, David and Hezekiah, all had their moral weaknesses, which, when rightly viewed, kept them from forgetting how much they owed to God, and how little they could depend upon themselves. And thus, however unpromising our life may seem to us, our brightest hope turning out unreal, toiling it may be year after year and taking nothing, we may still look forward; as the miraculous draught of fishes shows us, to a triumphant gain at last, far more than making up for all our disappointment. That may not be here. We may be called away while still toiling at our craft among the wild waves of life, and go down to our grave, thinking that in a great measure we have lived in vain. And yet the day awaits us, though here we see but the early dawn; and as has well been said, "if a man has found Heaven he can well afford to have lost Earth." But however cheerless the noon-time of our life may be, clouded perhaps with doubt, darkened with great misgivings as to the future, there still remains for us that promise so full of hope, that "at evening time it shall be light." That for the man working faithfully, waiting patiently, the clouds which obscure the sun at noon shall be chased away, and when all but yielding to despair, he will find that "at evening it will be light."

We must, however, be content to toil in patience till Christ vouchsafes success. Just like the miner who year after year follows through hard rock the thin vein of metal, yielding nothing at the time, but pointing to some broad lode which rewards him for all his previous toil. So is it with our lives; so is it with the Church. We must watch and pray, though toiling and taking nothing; yet faith and prayer, diligence and zeal are the conditions of final success. And at last the Lord Himself will reward us by unlooked for gain.

Thus in this miracle we behold the lesson of our lives, and may God give us grace to profit by it. Let us, earnestly seek the help of God to enable us to work diligently in our earthly calling, remembering that His eye beholds us. If He grants success, to Him be all the praise; if He tries our faith with disappointment, oh, beware that we sink not into despair. The bright morning is at hand, when Christ Himself shall lead us on to victory; when death shall have lost its power, when sorrow and sighing shall have fled away, and then we can look back with joy to our toiling among the dark waves of this life, feeling that our disappointment for the time has wrought for our good, for "in God's presence there is fulness of joy and at His right hand are there pleasures for evermore."

Church Sermons

BY EMINENT CLERGYMEN

No. 53.

A Sermon

BY THE

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PREACHED IN ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL, LONDON,

ON SUNDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 18, 1872.

"*Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might enquire of him? And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the Lord: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.*"—1 Kings xxii, 6-8.

Last Sunday, my brethren, we were face to face with Elijah and more remotely with Ahab, king of Israel, while each was still in the midst of his career; the king obeying the behests of his idolatrous wife, and persecuting the servants of God;—the prophet encountering the Idol system in all its strength, vanquishing it, seeing the fruits of his victory fade away before his very eyes, retiring in deep despondency into the desert, and yet pledging himself to the future by the call of his great successor, Elisha. But all human careers, even those which seem the greatest, are quickly spent; and to-day, in both cases, we have reached the close. In the first Lesson of this afternoon you have listened to the account of the great prophet's triumphant ascent by a whirlwind into heaven. In this morning's Lesson, the weak and wicked monarch has encountered his predestined doom; and it is to the circumstances which immediately preceded the tragedy at Ramoth-gilead, that I invite your attention.

Now, in order to thoroughly understand the historical setting of this conversation between Ahab and Jehoshaphat, which is given in the text, it is necessary to recall events that had occurred three years before this fatal expedition to take Ramoth-gilead. The power of Ben-hadad, king of Syria—at that period in the history of the kingdom of Israel, by far its most formidable enemy, for as yet Assyria, and still more Babylon, had not appeared upon the Mediterranean—the power of Ben-hadad had been broken by a double, and, in the last case, by a decisive defeat. At the head of an army commanded by thirty-two vassal kings, Ben-hadad had insolently demanded the surrender of Ahab's wealth, and possessions, even of his wives and children; and when this demand was pressed a second time in more peremptory terms, Ahab, in his weakness, resisted. Ben-hadad threatened that he would reduce the city of Samaria to ashes by so numerous an army that its very rubbish should scarcely suffice for each one of his soldiers to fill his hand; and to prove his contempt for the power of the Israelites, he gave orders for the attack to be made upon the city, whilst he himself was engaged in a mid-day carousal in his pavilion with his subject kings and his leading officers. The whole body of fighting Israelites was but seven thousand men,—the exact number observe, of those who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But the victory over Ben-hadad — and to this the sacred writer calls special attention—was really won by only two hundred and thirty-two servants of the provincial governors, men comparatively unarmed and without military training, who had come to seek shelter and safety in those troublous times within the walls of Samaria. Ben-hadad fled on horseback, while the king of Israel at the head of his troops, completely defeated the besieging army. But hoping to retrieve his fortunes, and to recover his lost ascendancy, Ben-hadad entered on a fresh campaign with the new year. His advisers had assured him that the God of Israel was only "a hill God," whose power did not really extend to the plains, and that, therefore, a new campaign in the valley of Esdraelon might have a very different result to the last. They also recommended Ben-hadad to raise his army to its former numbers, and to remove the vassal kings and his chief officers, who were suspected of not having done their duty, from their positions of command. After taking these measures, Ben-hadad advanced to the siege of Aphek, in the vale of Esdraelon. The army of Israel, says the sacred writer, looked like two miserable flocks of goats, in contrast to the Syrian host which filled the land with its vast levies; and yet a second time, Ahab was victorious. One hundred thousand fighting men fell in one day, twenty-seven thousand were destroyed by the fall of the walls of Aphek, and Ben-hadad, now a captive and trembling for his life, faithfully and thankfully promised, if his life only might be spared, to allow the Israelites a quarter for their bazaars in the streets of Damascus, and to restore all the cities which had been won from Israel in the campaigns against Ahab's father, Omri. Upon the faith of these terms Ben-hadad was released, and a peace of three years followed.

Now, it was in reference to this treaty, at the expiration of the three years, that Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat their making a joint expedition with a view of taking the city of Ramoth-gilead, which ought to have been surrendered with the rest, but which had been persistently held by the Syrians, notwithstanding the promise of Ben-hadad. Ahab had married his daughter to Jehoshaphat's son, and Jehoshaphat was on a visit at the Court of Samaria, so that everything was favourable—putting religious interests out of the question—for the two kings to co-operate against Ramoth-gilead. Certainly, too, Ahab appeared to have natural justice on his side in his wish to recover Ramoth-gilead; Ben-hadad having promised to surrender it, and by that promise having saved his life. Jehoshaphat had, at first, no hesitation in placing the whole force of the kingdom of Judah at the king of Israel's disposal for such an object. "I am," he said, "as thou art; my people as thy people; my horses as thy horses."

As against Ben-hadad, then, Ahab was in the right when he sought to recover Ramoth-gilead. But, there was another with whom he had to reckon, he had to reckon with God. Face to face with God, Ahab's real position was, at this period of his life, that of a condemned criminal; and he, therefore, was not in a moral position to represent and to act on behalf of the rights of Israel. Not to speak of the misery which he had brought upon his country by his encouragement of the Phœnician idolatry, he had placed himself under a ban by sparing, from a purely selfish motive, the life of Ben-hadad, which, like that of Agag, the Amalekite in an earlier age, could not be spared without injury to the Theocracy. As he returned from his great victory, he met the prophet of the Lord, who, after attracting his attention by a symbolical action characteristic of the time, had announced his sentence :—" Thus saith the Lord, because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people." Then came, not long after, the more serious matter of Naboth's vineyard, in which, at the instigation, and with the assistance of his wicked wife, Ahab had committed a judicial murder of singular atrocity, in order that he might improve his property. Then for the last time, in the garden of the murdered man, Elijah had met Ahab,—had foretold the extinction of his house, and the circumstances of his end. It was in the character of a herald of the Divine justice,—placed, like Jeremiah whom the Lord set over the nations and over the kingdoms, "to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, as well as to build and to plant,"—that Elijah thus passed sentence of death upon the king of Israel. Ahab's blood was to be licked up by the hungry dogs in the public square, where they had just licked up the blood of Naboth. Ahab's subsequent sorrow, led, indeed, to a modification of his sentence; his house was not to be extinguished absolutely with himself; but on himself, at the time of which we are speaking, the sentence of God's wrath, uttered by His prophet lay in all its awful power.

These dreadful predictions must, from time to time, have rung, we should think, in the ears of Ahab. They would have been a matter of common conversation in Judah and Benjamin, not less than in Israel. They must have been also familiar to Jehoshaphat. For a while, indeed, Ahab's life passed quietly in the midst of a numerous family, and surrounded by a brilliant court. Strengthened, moreover, in the good opinion of his subjects by his recent military successes, and by his alliance with the powerful and enterprising king of Judah, Ahab would, no doubt, have succeeded in escaping, at least, to a great extent, from his legitimate fears. But if, when after the lapse of time, Ahab proposed the joint expedition to Ramoth-gilead, his own faith in the words of the prophet did not suggest some reason for hesitation, Jehoshaphat, at least, was too prudent not to insist upon enquiry, at the hands of some accredited organ of the Mind of God, into the wisdom of the expedition. Jehoshaphat, it is true, had consented to co-operate with Ahab, but before he set out he wished to know what God was thinking, what God was willing, about the proposed course, if he possibly could.

Let us pause, my brethren, for a moment, if only to note here a great duty in all men who really believe in God's providential care and love—the duty of ascertaining, so far as we can, what He would wish, what He would approve and disapprove, before we undertake any considerable work, or enter upon any new course in life. For it is certain that whatever we undertake in things great or small, in things spiritual, or temporal, He is watching us; He is passing judgment of some sort upon us; and He will one day call us to account for our actions. It is, at least, practical for us to think of this now. We may not, indeed, have prophets at hand who see visions in the heavens, unveiling as did the vision of Micaiah the inmost machinery of the Divine Government. God deals with His people in one way at one period, — in another at a later one. But, by way of compensation, we do know more of the principles of His government than did the Israelites in the days of Ahab. We know more of His power, much more of His love, and more of His will, as they bear upon the details of human life. We can, therefore, in the great majority of cases decide for ourselves the question of going up to Ramoth-gilead. We can always, and should always apply to God in prayer for enlightenment and guidance by His Holy Spirit within the soul through the course of events without it. Our prayer should be "Lead me forth in Thy truth, and learn me, for Thou art the God of my salvation." For, most assuredly, God will take His own way of teaching us His Will, and not seldom, now as of old, is that Will best learnt from some friend whose moral and religious character, whose balanced judgment, whose ready sympathies, we can really trust; who will look at our case in a spirit of perfect goodwill, and yet with the high impartiality of perfect independence. Everything depends in a case of this kind, on this question,—Who is to be consulted? The gravest issues, as in Ahab's case, may hang upon the answer to that question. Ahab actually applied to four hundred prophets who were likely, he thought, by their numbers and position, to satisfy the scruples of Jehoshaphat, and to fortify the resolution at which he had himself arrived. But who were those prophets? Prophets of whom? The question has been eagerly debated among Biblical scholars. The opinion that they were the prophets of the Phœnician deities, Ashraal or Baal,—prophets who had not appeared upon Carmel and who had, therefore, escaped the doom of their colleagues,—is inconsistent with the statement that Ahab was seeking to know the word of Jehovah at their hands. On the other hand, it is plain from Jehoshaphat's second demand that they were not legitimate prophets of the Lord, in the sense in which Elijah and the pupils of the prophetical schools were. They would, therefore, seem to have been prophets of Jehovah, whom they worshipped, illegally under the symbol of a calf; an order of men who had arisen in the reign of Jeroboam, and who practised prophecying as a profession, without any positive call from God, and who, at the present time, when the Phœnician idolatry had fallen into something like discredit, were in the pay, or at least under the influence, of the court of Samaria.

It must have been an extraordinary sight which was witnessed outside the principal gate of Samaria on that eventful day. Upon a platform erected a little in advance of the gate, were raised two thrones, upon which in full regal splendour, sat the now intimately allied monarchs of Judah and of Israel, while the four hundred prophets, one after another, prophesied before them. In the dress, and with much of the manner of modern Eastern Dervishes, one after another, each took up his parable, but the refrain of each was ever the same—"Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." One prophet there was, indeed, more intrepid and enterprising than the rest, Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, who particularly distinguished himself among the four hundred. He practically illustrated his prophecy by a dramatic or symbolic action to render it more impressive. He made horns of iron, that is to say spikes, in allusion to the figure employed by Moses in the vision of Joseph, which was intended to convey to the tribe of Ephraim a promise of perpetual favour; and then advancing from among the rest, towards the foot of the throne, he brandished his iron horns and cried to Ahab "With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou hast destroyed them."

The demonstration, as a whole, was all that Ahab wanted. It was of value as a means of moulding public opinion in favour of the proposed expedition; and though he did not attach much weight to such things, it was in its way, satisfactory to him. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied. Indeed Ahab and Jehoshaphat were not really aiming at the same thing. Ahab merely wanted the sanction of Religion, if he could possibly get it, upon a project as to which he had already made up his mind. Jehoshaphat really wished, if he could, to know what God's Will was about Ahab's project. Jehoshaphat surveyed the four hundred prophets, their numbers, their picturesqueness, their peculiar position and influence; he listened to their loud, reiterated cry—"Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper"—reiterated, as if victory could be already assured by all this exuberance of official enthusiasm. But he was not content, and he turned to ask Ahab whether there was not "a prophet of the Lord besides, that he might enquire of him?" Ahab was annoyed at the question;

although on the part of Jehoshaphat it was strictly legitimate and inevitable. Jehoshaphat naturally could not trust the prophets of Jeroboam's schism—the prophets of the calves. Ahab sullenly replied "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah," but added that he hated Micaiah because of his never prophesying good of him, but evil. Still, a chamberlain was sent to fetch Micaiah, and on the way back this courtier expressed a hope that Micaiah would feel himself at liberty to prophesy in the same sense and terms as the four hundred had done. To this Micaiah replied that his message was not a plaything which he could mould at will, — that he was instructed from heaven, and that he must speak according to the terms of his instructions—"What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak." On reaching the Royal presence Micaiah was asked, as had been the others, the formal question: "Shall we go up against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we forbear?" And he answered, at first in the very words of the four hundred—"Go up, and prosper: for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." There must have been something in the prophet's tone which betrayed his real mind to the heart of Ahab—something which suggested that this was not the real judgment of the prophet, but only an ironical echo of the language of the courtiers, who were guided in their pretended inspiration by purely selfish and personal considerations. Ahab's suspicions were aroused, and angry and frightened, he adjured Micaiah to speak only the truth in the name of Jehovah; and then it was that Micaiah told how he had seen in visions Israel scattered upon the mountains of Gilead, "as sheep without a shepherd," and how he had heard the voice of the true King of the nations sounding from the heavens—"These have no master: let them return every one to his home in peace"—implying that Ahab would have fallen in the contemplated attack upon Ramoth-gilead. And when Ahab attributed his prophecy to Micaiah's personal hostility to himself Micaiah replied, by showing how the Lord had determined that Ahab, being led astray by the predictions of teachers who were inspired by the spirit of falsehood, would be lured on to the war in which he would meet his doom.

This second vision has a bearing upon a great question—upon the permission and control of Evil by a good God—which is of the utmost importance. It is not within our present purpose to consider it. We can only just glance at what followed—at the indignation of Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, at Micaiah's depreciatory account of the origin of his inspirations—at the altercation which ensued between him and Micaiah—at the king's sentence upon the intrepid prophet, upon whose life and history, as the prison doors of the house of the governor of Samaria close upon him, the Bible record throws no further light.

Now, here let us carefully note the fact that Ahab's tragical fate was the immediate consequence of preferring his own will, backed up by the advice of the four hundred, to the revelations of Micaiah. Why Jehoshaphat, after Micaiah's prophecy, still consented to join in the expedition we do not certainly know. It was, probably an additional illustration of that element of weakness in his character which had led him to consent originally to a marriage alliance with the house of Ahab. But Ahab, although he took his own way, was haunted by a suspicion that the imprisoned and injured Micaiah might, after all, be right. Accordingly he entered the battle in disguise that he might not attract the notice of the Syrian archers; and Jehoshaphat, who was the only soldier with royal decorations on his person, being mistaken for the king of Israel was in consequence exposed to a charge of unusual violence, from which he was with difficulty rescued by his body-guard. But Ahab's precautions were all in vain. No human contrivance can avert the execution of the Divine decrees. A Syrian archer drew his bow, as the Hebrew expresses it, in his simplicity; that is to say without aiming at any one man in particular, and he struck the king of Israel at the point where his iron breastplate joined the hanging skirt, which covered the lower part of his body. Ahab knew at once that the wound was mortal, but, that he might not dishearten his soldiers, he, with the help of his armour-bearer, stiffened himself into an upright posture before the advancing Syrians, while his ebbing-life blood gradually filled the hollow of the chariot in which he rode. Towards sunset the truth became known throughout the army of Israel; then the cry went forth—the solemn cry—" Every man to his city, and every man to his land." The royal chariot returned to Samaria, but the king whom it bore had ceased to breathe, and it was noted how, when they washed the chariot in the public pool or conduit at Samaria, the dogs licked up the blood of the murderer of Naboth, at the scene and under the circumstances foretold by Elijah.

The character of Ahab's mind at this, the last crisis of his sad and eventful life is seen in two respects;—in his willingness to consult the prophets of the calves — in his prejudice against Micaiah. They are the two sides of a disposition towards Religion, which, in its principle, is fundamentally one and the same—a disposition which was exhibited in all its main features by Saul, the first king of the chosen people. It is not downright contemptuous, bitter opposition; still less is it the loyalty of faith and love. It is a willingness to welcome Religion, if Religion will only sanction the projects, the views, the passions, the characters, of its patrons. Ahab anticipated, to a certain extent, the ideas of writers such as Hobbes and Malmesbury; writers who have been convinced that Religion is a great power in human life and history—that it can be made useful in winning the minds of men to the political measures which are resolved upon by earthly governments—in making the process of government easier by reinforcing it with something like a supernatural lustre in the eyes of the multitude. Ahab had no notion of seeking the Will of God for himself, with the simple intention of obeying it. He welcomed the four hundred, because he knew beforehand exactly what the four hundred would say. He knew that they were his creatures; he knew that they were not in a position to give him honestly independent advice at this most critical juncture—that in fact they would simply echo in religious language, a conclusion at which he himself had before arrived on grounds of political expediency. He followed not them, but himself. He disobeyed a voice which he could not silence—which, willingly, he would not have heard. He knew that Micaiah was an independent adviser, but he did not want to be told unwelcome truths, even in a matter of life and death. He took his own way, and his tragical end was the consequence of his doing so.

Let us learn, hence, two lessons; and first, an important principle of Church polity—the importance of making religious teachers, if you can, independent of those whom they have to teach. The question, my brethren, is a very practical one. When a new parochial district, for instance, is being laid out, and an income has to be provided for the proposed incumbent. Why, it is asked, should there be any endowment? Why cannot a modern clergyman subsist upon the voluntary offerings of his flock, as the Apostles did before him? My brethren, I do not deny that many men can do so; that, in all ages of the Church, you will find those who inherit, along with the apostolic commission the apostolic spirit in all its fulness—men who, in St. Paul's exact sense have learnt in whatsoever state they are therewith to be content. But these are, generally speaking, men who, for the better doing of their Master's work, refuse to embarrass themselves with the cares of a family, and have no one's support to provide for as a matter of strict duty but their own. But if you my brethren of the laity, resolve—and there are grave reasons to justify your resolution—if you resolve that the mass of your clergy shall be married men, you must make up your minds either to make them independent, or to surround yourselves too often, and too certainly, with the echoes of your own inclinations and wishes with the four hundred prophets of the calves. The clergyman, who with a number of children depending upon him, has to think from the first day of the year, about the collection which will be made for him at the end of it, must be heroic indeed if he never yields to the temptation of softening down a truth which is unwelcome to his paymasters, or extenuating a fault which is notoriously popular among them. There are, of course, some of the laity in every generation who would rather have it so. They do not, they say, like too much independence on the part of clergy. They do not want prophets of God, but exponents of their own tastes and opinions. They prefer Zedekiah, the son of Chenaanah, with his magnificient compliments—with his horns of iron—to Micaiah the son of Imlah, with his simple capacity saying nothing but the truth. They fear that an independent clergy will abuse their independence; and it is, of course, impossible to deny, that at particular periods of church history and in particular countries, this has been the case on a considerable scale. The clergy, are of course not perfect—not infallible. They are not exempt from the temptation to abuse their trust; but a man goes much more against the instincts of a healthy conscience, if he abuses it in the interests of a professional, or of a class ambition, than if he abuses it that he may feed and clothe those who are nearest and dearest to him. It is the laity who suffer most—much more by a dependent clergy, than do the clergy themselves. The wounds which may be left in a clerical conscience, when Truth has been concealed, or sin palliated for the sake of daily bread, are terribly avenged by the self-inflicted moral and spiritual degradation of a Christian community, which voluntarily can seek in its religious teachers—not the best that it can learn the Will of the All Holy, uttered in all its integrity with a fearless independence—but the mere reflection in religious language, of its own shortsightedness, of its own worldliness,—in a word,—of its own resolution to go up, come what may, to Ramoth-gilead.

See too, here, a lesson of religious practice. They who do not seek false teachers may yet take only so much of the true teaching as falls in with their own lower inclinations. And this is another form of the error of Ahab. They do not go so far as to consult the prophets of the calves, but they have no inclination to listen to all that Micaiah, the son of Imlah, has to say to them. This may be seen in the way in which many men read the Bible. It is not merely that they have, as the phrase is, their "favourite books" and their "favourite chapters." That is intelligible, because God may most assuredly attract one soul through this part of His revelation, and another soul through another. But it is that they take no heed of the rest, while it is probable that the very portions which they never read, or which they are imprudent enough to deem of inferior, or of no importance, may be the very portions of the Bible which their particular characters need the most. They study the Sermon on the Mount; they have nothing to say to the Epistles of St. Paul. Or they study a few chapters in the Romans and Galatians; they never read, and do not like St. James. Or they do not see the use of the historical books of the Old Testament, or the enthusiasms of the Psalter, or the visions of Ezekiel, and the Apocalypse. It seems a slavery to them to follow, day by day, the settled order of the Church Lessons; and yet, if they would do this, they would be in a fair way to get at the whole counsel of God, as set before them in His Holy Word, as they would almost go through the whole of the Old Testament once, and the New Testament twice, in the course of a year, and would not be in danger of omitting those parts of the Sacred Volume, which, though not quite so agreeable are not on that account the less useful to themselves. In the same way, men have their favourite duties, the performance of which as they think without saying so relieves them from the performance of the rest. They would on no account break the eighth commandment or the sixth: they are less careful about the seventh and the ninth. They are alive to the importance of charity: they do not attach much value to daily prayer. They practise the social virtues: they care little about the personal virtues. They are careful to be kindly and generous in small matters: they see no harm in being grasping, even to the very verge of dishonesty, in great ones. They pay their debts regularly, but they neglect the Holy Communion. They have books, they have prophets of their own which put the Divine Will before them in a manner which consults their predilections. And in the same way men have their favourite doctrines. Micaiah may preach of the Divine benevolence, but he must say very little about Divine justice. He may show the social advantages of Christianity; he had better say but little of its mysteries. He may enlarge on the blessings of accepting Redemption: he must say nothing of the consequence of rejecting it. If God, in short, will only say what His creature approves of, His creature will be content. But if the Gospel or Creed, like Micaiah's message of old, has its "warning clauses," so much the worse for Creed or Gospel, when Ahab is sitting on his throne at the gate of Samaria, and has made up his mind, come what may, to go up to Ramoth-gilead.

Brethren, our first work in our souls—the work upon which everything else depends—is to be true. To seek to know ourselves, indeed, as we are, and God, so far we can, as He is. To distrust all that, as we think, merely reflects our own wishes, to make the most of all that speaks fearlessly of and for God, about God, about ourselves. To determine that we will not less prize a knowledge of this kind because it humbles, because it disappoints, because it pains and checks us in a thousand ways, for this knowledge is the very first step in the road to Calvary, which is the road to Paradise. To stifle, to mutilate, to debauch if we could do so, the accents of the Divine Voice, is but to seal our own death-warrant. We have nothing to fear from the humiliations that the true standard of the Gospel may—nay, must—inflict upon our guilty consciences, because we may rise out of, and by, these very humiliations, up to that Cross which saves us from them.

In the last contest with Death, which is before each one of us, like the dying Ahab sinking down into his chariot, we shall think cheaply enough of the four hundred prophets who have charmed us here through life by a thousand organs of Opinion: we shall know that after all, He who spoke by Micaiah was surely right. May He grant that in those solemn moments this knowledge may not have come too late,—that we may be stayed on the Hands that were pierced for our salvation,—that we may know Him Whom we have, at whatever cost, believed, as the Eternal reward of a faith which will then be melting into sight!

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